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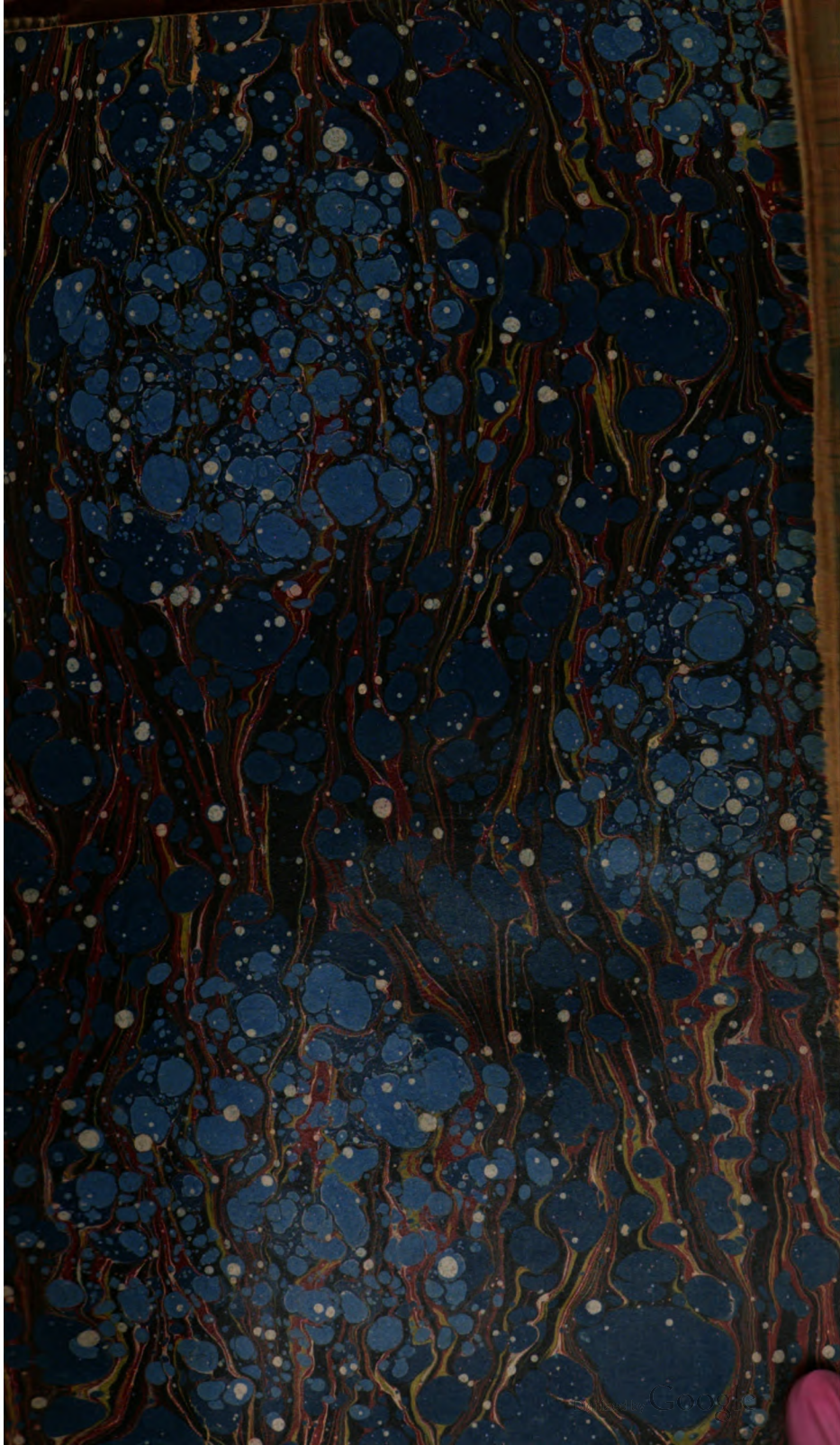
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OF THE LATE

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

WITH A

NOTICE OF HIS LIFE,

BY HIS SON,

AND THOUGHTS ON HIS GENIUS AND WRITINGS,

BY

E. L. BULWER, Esq., M.P.

AND Mr SERGEANT TALFOURD, M.P.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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. ESSAY X.

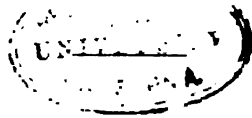
ON SELF-LOVE.

VOL. II.

B

ESSAY X.

ON SELF-LOVE.



THE modern system of philosophy has one great advantage, which makes it difficult to attack it with any hopes of success, namely, that it is not founded on any of the prevailing opinions or natural feelings of mankind. It rests upon a single principle—its boasted superiority over all prejudice. Unsupported by facts or reason, it is by this circumstance alone enabled to trample upon every dictate of the understanding or feeling of the heart, as weak and vulgar prejudices. In this alone it is secure and invulnerable. To this it owes its giant power and dreaded name. Let the contradictions and fallacies contained in the system be proved over and over again, still the answer is ready:—all the objections made to it are resolved into *prejudice*. Destitute of every other support, it staggers our faith in received opinions by the hardihood of its assertions, and derives its claim to implicit credence by the boldness of its defiance of all established authority. Common sense is brought to the bar like

an old offender, and condemned without a hearing. Under the shelter of this presumption there is no absurdity so great as not to be advanced with impunity. There is no hypothesis, however gratuitous, however inadequate, or however unfounded, that is not held up as the true one, if it is but contrary to all observation and experience. The grossest credulity succeeds to the most extravagant scepticism. From being the slaves of authority we become the dupes of paradox. Every opinion which is so absurd as never to have been affirmed before is converted into an undeniable truth. Whoever dares to question it, unawed by the authority on the one hand, and undazzled by the novelty on the other, is considered as a person of a narrow and bigoted understanding, and as relinquishing all claim to the exercise of his reason. We are effectually deterred from protesting against any of these "wise saws and modern instances" by the dread of being mixed up with the vulgar, and we dare not avoid the common feelings of humanity lest we should be ridiculed as the dupes of self-love, or of the whining cant of moralists. There is however no bigotry so blind as that which is founded on a supposed exemption from all prejudice. The mind in this case identifies every opinion of its own with reason

itself: and regarding the objections made to it as proceeding from a jaundiced and distorted view of the case, it converts them into the strongest confirmations of the depth and comprehensiveness of its own views. There are accordingly no people so little capable of reasoning as those who make the loudest pretensions to it: and having assumed the name of Philosophers, are astonished that any one should call their title in question.

I have been led to make these observations from reading Helvetius's account of self-love, which is nothing but a series of misrepresentations and assumptions of the question, and which can only have imposed upon his readers from that tone of confidence and alertness which men always have in attacking a received and long-established principle, and a tacit and involuntary feeling that boldness of opinion implies strength and independence of mind. A few examples will show that this censure is well-founded. "What," says this author in the beginning of his view of the question,—“ what is the human understanding? It is the assemblage of his ideas. To what sort of understanding do we give the name of talent? To the understanding concentrated upon a single subject; that is to say to a large assemblage of ideas of the same kind.

“ Now if there are no innate ideas, human understanding and genius are only acquired; and both one and the other have the following faculties for their principles :

“ 1. Physical sensibility; without which we could receive no sensations.

“ 2. Memory, that is to say, the faculty of recalling the sensations received.

“ 3. The interest which we have in comparing our sensations together, that is to say, in observing with attention the resemblances and differences, the agreements and disagreements of several objects amongst them. It is this interest which fixes the attention, and in minds commonly well-organised, is the efficient cause of understanding.”

It is added in a note, “ To judge, according to M. Rousseau, is not to feel. The proof of his opinion is that we have a faculty or power which enables us to compare objects. Now this power according to him cannot be the effect of physical sensibility. But,” continues Helvetius, “ if Rousseau had more profoundly considered the question, he would have perceived that this power (or faculty of understanding) is no other than the interest itself which we have to compare these objects, and that this interest takes its rise in the feeling of self-love, which is

the immediate effect of physical sensibility." This is the author's account of the understanding. It is bold and decided, but it is not on that account either more or less true. It comes to this; that the faculty or power of understanding is owing to the use we have for such a faculty; or that we have a power of comparing our sensations, because we have an interest in comparing them, and that therefore this power is nothing but the effect of physical sensibility. So that a man before he has any understanding, feeling the want of it, supplies himself with this very necessary faculty by an act of the will, and out of pure friendly regard to himself. The interest or desire to fly might at this rate supply us with a pair of wings, or an effort of curiosity might furnish us with a new sense, or an effort of self-interest might enable a man to be in two places at once. All these consequences might very easily follow, if we were only satisfied to believe any extravagance of assertion, and to use words systematically without either connexion or meaning.

The whole of this writer's argument against the existence of a benevolent principle in the mind is founded either on a play of words, or an arbitrary substitution of one feeling for another. He has confounded, and does not

even seem to have been aware of the distinction between, self-love, considered as a rational principle of action, or the voluntary and deliberate pursuit of our own good as such, and that immediate interest or gratification which the mind may have in the pursuit of any object either relating to ourselves or others. He sometimes evidently considers the former of these, that is, a deliberating, calculating, conscious selfishness, as the only rational principle of action, and treats all other feelings as romance and folly, or even denies their existence; while at other times he contends that the most disinterested generosity, patriotism, and love of fame, are equally and in the strictest sense self-love, because the pursuit of these objects is connected with and tends immediately and intentionally to the gratification of the individual who has an attachment to them.

After stating the sentiment of Rousseau, that without an innate and abstract sense of right and wrong we should not see the just man and the true citizen consult the public good to his own prejudice, Helvetius goes on thus:—"No one, I reply, has ever been found to promote the public good when it injured his own interest. The patriot who risks his life to crown himself with glory, to gain the public esteem, and

to deliver his country from slavery, yields to the feeling which is most agreeable to him. Why should he not place his happiness in the exercise of virtue, in the acquisition of public respect, and in the pleasure consequent upon this respect? For what reason, in a word, should he not expose his life for his country, when the sailor and soldier, the one at sea, and the other in the trenches, daily expose theirs for a shilling? The virtuous man who seems to sacrifice his own good to that of the public is only governed by a sentiment of noble self-interest. Why should M. Rousseau deny here that interest is the exclusive and universal motive of action, when he himself admits it in a thousand places of his works?" The author then quotes the following passage from Rousseau's 'Emilius' in support of his doctrine:—"A man may indeed pretend to prefer my interest to his own; however plausibly he colours over this falsehood, I am quite sure it is one." But I would ask why, on the principle just stated by Helvetius, he should not prefer another to himself, "if it is agreeable to him?" Why should he not place his happiness in the exercise of friendship? Why should he not risk his life for his friend, as well as the patriot for his country, or as the soldier or sailor for a shilling a day? What is become, all of

a sudden, of that noble self-interest which identifies us with our country and our kind? Is it quite forgot? Has it evaporated with a breath? Is there nothing of it left? When any instances are brought, or supposed, of the sacrifice of private interest to principle, or virtue, or passion, it is immediately pretended that these instances are not at all inconsistent with the grand universal principle of self-interest, which embraces all the sentiments and affections of the human mind, even the most heroical and disinterested. But the moment these instances are out of sight and the evasion is no longer necessary, this expansive principle shrinks into its own natural littleness again; and excludes all regard to the good of others as romantic and idle folly. All those instances of virtue which are at one moment, perfectly compatible with this "universal principle of action" are the next moment said to be incompatible with it, and the author after his little rhetorical glozings on the extensive views and generous sacrifices of self-interest, immediately descends into the vulgar proverb that "the misfortunes of others are but a dream." To proceed: Helvetius says, (p. 14):

"What we understand by goodness or the moral sense in man, is his benevolence towards

others : and this benevolence we always find in proportion to the utility they are of to him. I prefer my fellow-citizens to strangers, and my friend to my fellow-citizens. The welfare of my friend is reflected upon me. If he becomes more rich and more powerful, I partake of his riches and his power. Benevolence towards others is nothing, then, but the effect of love to ourselves."

The inference here stated, that benevolence is merely a reflection from self-love, is founded on the assumption that we always feel for others in proportion to the advantage they are of to us, and this assumption is a false one. That the habitual or known connexion between our own welfare and that of others, is one great source of our attachment to them, one bond of society, is what I do not wish to deny : the question is whether it is the only one in the mind, or whether benevolence has not a natural basis of its own to rest upon, as well as self-love. Grant this, and the actual effects which we observe in human life will follow from both principles combined : but to say that our attachment to others is in the exact ratio of our obligations to them, is contrary to all we know of human nature. I would ask whether the affection of a mother for her child is owing to the good received or be-

stowed ; to the child's power of conferring benefits, or its standing in need of assistance? Are not the fatigues which the mother undergoes for the child, its helpless condition, its little vexations, its sufferings from ill health or accidents, additional ties upon maternal tenderness, which by increasing the attention to the wants of the child and anxiety to supply them, produce a proportionable interest in and attachment to its welfare? Helvetius justly observes that we prefer a friend to a stranger, but the reason which he assigns for it, that our interests and pleasures are more closely allied, is not the only one. We participate in the successes of our friends, it is true, but we also participate in their distresses and disappointments, and it is not always found that this lessens our regard for them. Benevolence, therefore, is not a mere physical reflection from self-love. His account of friendship agrees exactly with that which the grave historian of Jonathan Wild has given of the friendship between his hero and Count La Ruse : " Mutual interest, the greatest of all purposes, was the cement of this alliance, which nothing of consequence but superior interest was capable of dissolving."

The mechanical principle of association, understood in a strict sense, will not account for

the multifarious and mixed nature of our affections, and if we do not understand it in a strict sense, it will then only be another name for sympathy, imagination, or any thing else.

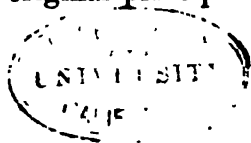
“What then in truth,” proceeds this author, “is the natural goodness, or moral sense, so much extolled by the English? What distinct idea can we form of such a sense, or on what evidence found its existence? If we allow a moral sense, why not allow an algebraical or chemical sense? Nothing is more absurd than this theological philosophy of Shaftesbury, and yet most of the English are as much delighted with it as the French formerly were with their music. It is not the same with other nations. No foreigner can understand the one or hear the other. It is a film on the eye of the English, which it is necessary to remove in order that they may see.

“According to their philosophy, a man in a state of indifference, sitting in his elbow chair, desires the good of others: but in as far as he is indifferent, man desires and can desire nothing. A state of desire and indifference is incompatible. These philosophers repeat in vain that the moral sense is implanted in man, and makes him at a certain time disposed to

compassionate the sufferings of his fellows. This system is in fact nothing more than the system of innate ideas overturned by Locke. For my part, I can form an idea of my five senses, and of the organs which constitute them: but I confess that I have no more idea of a moral sense than of a moral elephant and castle. The enthusiasts for 'moral beauty' are ignorant of the contempt in which these notions are held by all those who, either in the character of statesmen, officers of police, or men of the world, have an opportunity of knowing what human nature is."—Page 15.

In reply to the dogmatical question with which this passage begins—"What distinct idea can be given of the moral sense?"—I answer for myself, the following very explicit one: namely, that it is the natural preference of good to evil, arising from the conception or idea formed of them in the understanding. Those who assert a moral sense, affirm that there is a faculty of some sort or other inseparable from the nature of a rational and intelligent being, that enables us to form a conception of good and evil, or of the feelings of pleasure and pain generally speaking, which ideas so formed have a natural tendency to excite certain affections and actions.

Those, on the other hand, who deny a moral sense, or any thing equivalent to it, must affirm either that we can form no idea whatever of the feelings of others, or of good and evil generally speaking, or that these ideas have no possible influence over the mind, except from their connexion with physical impressions, memory, habit, self-interest, or some other motive, quite distinct from the ideas themselves. But I have already shown that without the co-operation of rational motives, there could be neither habit, nor self-interest, nor voluntary action of any kind. The moral is therefore nothing but the application of the understanding to the feelings or ideas of good. The question, consequently, whether there is a moral sense, is reducible to this; whether the mind can understand or conceive, or be affected by any thing beyond its own physical or mechanical feelings. If it can, then there is something in man besides his five senses and the organs which compose them, for these can give him no thought, conception, or sympathy with any thing beyond himself, or even with himself beyond the present moment. The actions, and events, and feelings of human life, the passions and pursuits of men, could no more go on without the interference of the understanding than without an original principle of



physical sensibility. Neither the one nor the other explains the whole economy of our moral nature, but that is no reason why both are not essential and integrant parts of it. The five senses and the organs which compose them will not account for the science of morality, let it be as imperfect as it may, any more than for the science of algebra or chemistry in the different degrees in which they are possessed by different men. The point is not whether reason is furnishing us with a perfect and infallible rule of action, absolute over any other motive or passion, but whether it is any rule at all, whether it has any possible influence over our moral feelings. According to Helvetius, the moral sense is either a word without meaning, or it must signify one of our five senses: that is, impressions not actually affecting one or other of these are to him absolutely nothing. It is strange that after this he should propose to take the film from the eyes of those who ridiculously fancy that they have other ideas. It is as if a blind man should undertake to undeceive those who can see, with respect to certain chemical notions, called objects of sight. In confirmation of his theory, he refers the romantic admirers of moral beauty to the opinion of certain classes and professions of men, whose visual ray has

been purged, and who, it should seem, possess a sort of second sight into human nature, namely, ministers of state, officers of police, and men of business. Either this argument is a satire on these characters, or on the understanding of his readers. If these respectable, and, I dare say, very well-meaning persons, are by the narrowness of their occupations and views, precluded from any general knowledge of human nature, or the virtues of the human heart, it is an uncivil irony to propose them as consummate judges of the abstract nature of man. If, on the other hand, in spite of their employment, they retain the same notions and liberality of feeling as other men, there is no reason to suppose that they would subscribe to the sentiment of our author, that morality "is an affair of the five senses:" a proposition which any minister of state, or police officer, or man of the world, possessed of the least common sense, would treat with as much contempt and incredulity as Shaftesbury or Hutcheson. Our author's observation, that the notion of a moral sense or natural disposition to sympathize with others, is only the doctrine of innate ideas in disguise, is another misconception of the nature of the question. The actual feeling of compassion is not, as he says, innate; but this no

more proves that the disposition to compassion or benevolence is not innate, than the fact that the ideas or feelings of pleasure and pain are not innate and born with us, proves that physical sensibility is not an original faculty of the mind. Moral sensibility, or the capacity of being affected by the ideas of certain objects, is as much a part of our nature as physical sensibility, or the capacity of being affected in a certain manner by the objects themselves. Helvetius says, physical sensibility is the only quality essential to the nature of man: I answer, that physical sensibility is *not* the only quality essential to the nature of man. To show how senseless and insignificant is this kind of reasoning, I will refer back to Helvetius's concise profession of his metaphysical faith, which is that he can form an idea of the five senses and of the organs of them, but of nothing else. Now, I may ask, how he comes by this *idea*? Which of his senses or which of the organs of them is it that gives him an idea of the other four? Has the eye an action of words, or the ear of colours, or either of the impressions of taste, smell, or feeling? Which of them is the common sense? or if none, must we not suppose some superintending faculty to which all the other impressions are subject, and which alone can give him an idea of his

own senses or their organs? Another instance of the utter want of logical and consecutive reasoning which characterizes the French philosophers, might be given in their singular proof of the selfishness of the human mind from the incompatibility of a state of desire and a state of indifference. The English philosophers are charged with representing a man in a state of indifference, "seated in his arm-chair," as desiring the good of others. This arm-chair it should seem, no less than his state of indifference, presents certain insurmountable barriers to his desires, which they cannot pass so as to effect him with the slightest concern for any thing beyond it. So far as a man is indifferent to every thing, he cannot it is true desire any thing. All that follows from this is, that so far as he desires the good of others he is not in a state of indifference.

That a man cannot desire an object and not desire it at the same time requires no proof. But what ought to have been proved, and what was meant to be so, is that a man in a state of indifference to the welfare of others on his own account, cannot desire it for their sake, and this is what is not proved by the truism mentioned. The general maxim, that I cannot desire any object as long as I am indifferent to it, cannot

be made to show that self-interest is the only motive that can make me pass from the one state into the other. By indifference, as used by the writers here ridiculed, in a popular sense, is evidently meant the want of personal or physical interest in any object, and to say that this necessarily implies the want of every other kind of interest in it, of all rational desire of the good of others, is a meagre assumption of the point in dispute. It is strange that these pretenders to philosophy should choose to insult the English writers for daring to wear the plain, homely, useful, national garb of philosophy, while their most glossy and most fashionable suits are made up of the shreds and patches stolen from our countryman Hobbes, disguised with a few spangles, tinselled lace, and tagged points of their own.

Helvetius's paraphrase of Hobbes's maxim, that "pity is only another name for self-love," is as follows :

"What then do I feel in the presence of an object of compassion? A strong emotion. What causes this emotion? The recollection of the sufferings to which man is subject, and to which I am myself liable. It is this consideration that disturbs, that torments me, and so long as the unfortunate sufferer continues in my presence

I am affected with melancholy sensations. Have I relieved him,—do I no longer see him? A calm is insensibly restored to my breast, because in proportion to the distance to which he is removed, the remembrance of the evils which his sight recalled is gradually effaced. When I was concerned for him, then, I was concerned only for myself. What are, in fact, the sufferings which I compassionate the most? They are those not only which I have felt myself, but those which I may still feel. Those evils the more present to my memory impress me more strongly. My sympathy with the sufferings of another is always in exact proportion to my fear of being exposed to the same sufferings myself. I would willingly, if it were possible, destroy the very germ of my own sufferings in him, and thus be released from the apprehension of the like evils to myself in time to come. The love of others is never any thing more in the human mind than the effect of love to ourselves, and consequently of our physical sensibility.”—Vol. ii. page 20.

To this I answer as follows:—What do I feel in the presence of an object of compassion? A strong emotion. What causes this emotion? Not, certainly, the general recollection of the sufferings to which man in general is

subject, or to which I myself may be exposed. It is not this remote and accidental reflection, which has no particular reference to the object before me, but a strong sense of the sufferings of the particular person, excited by his immediate presence, which affects me with compassion, and impels me to his relief. The relief I afford him, or the absence of the object, lessens my uneasiness, either by the contemplation of the diminution of his sufferings, to which I have contributed, or by diverting my mind from the consideration of his sufferings. Neither the relief afforded, nor the absence of the object could produce this effect, if the strong emotion which I experience did not relate to the particular object. It is the fate of the individual, and of him only, which I am contemplating, and my sympathy accordingly rises and falls with it, or as my attention is more or less fixed upon it. A total alteration in the situation of the individual produces a total change in my feelings with respect to him, which could not be the case, if my compassion depended wholly on my sense of my own security, or the general condition of human nature. In feeling compassion for another, therefore, it was not for myself that I was concerned, but for the sufferer: my feelings were, in a manner, bound up with

his, and I forgot for the moment both myself and others. But do I not compassionate most those evils which I have felt myself? Yes; because from my own knowledge of them I have a more lively sense of what others must suffer from them: just in the same manner I dread those evils most with respect to myself in time to come. For those evils which I have not experienced, I feel, for that reason, less sympathy in respect to others, and less dread with reference to myself in time to come. Neither do I always feel for others in proportion as I dread the same feelings myself. The memory of my past sufferings cannot excite my disposition to relieve those of others, and the imaginary apprehension of my own *future* sufferings can only tend to produce voluntary action on the same principle as my imagination of those of others. I do not wish to prevent their sufferings as the germ or cause of mine, but because they are of the same nature as mine. Benevolence, therefore, is not the effect of self-love, though it is the effect of our physical sensibility, combined with our other faculties. I will in this place insert the reply of Bishop Butler (a true philosopher) to the same argument in Hobbes, in a note to one of his sermons.

“ If any person can in earnest doubt whether

there be such a thing as good-will in one man towards another (for the question is not concerning either the degree or extensiveness of it, but concerning the affection itself,) let it be observed, that *whether man be thus or otherwise constituted, what is the inward frame in this particular* is a mere question of fact or natural history, not proveable immediately by reason. It is therefore to be judged of and determined in the same way other facts or historical matters are; by appealing to the external senses, or inward perceptions, respectively, as the matter under consideration is cognizable by one or the other; by arguing from acknowledged facts and actions, inquiring whether these do not suppose and prove the matter in question so far as it is capable of proof. And, lastly, by the testimony of mankind. Now that there is some degree of benevolence amongst men, may be as strongly and plainly proved in all these ways, as it could possibly be proved, supposing there was this affection in our nature. And should any one think fit to assert, that resentment in the mind of man was absolutely nothing but reasonable concern for our own safety, the falsity of this, and what is the real nature of that passion, could be shown in no other ways than those in which it may be shown, that there is such

a thing in *some degree* as *real* good-will in man towards man.

“ There being manifestly this appearance of men’s substituting others for themselves, and being carried out and affected towards them as towards themselves ; some persons, who have a system which excludes every affection of this sort, have taken a pleasant method to solve it ; and tell you it is *not another* you are at all concerned about, but your *self only*, when you feel the affection called compassion ; *i. e.* there is a plain matter of fact, which men cannot reconcile with the general account they think fit to give of things : they therefore, instead of *that* manifest fact, substitute *another*, which is reconcilable to their own scheme. For does not every body by compassion mean an affection the object of which is another in distress ? Instead of this, but designing to have it mistaken for this, they speak of an affection or passion, the object of which is ourselves, or danger to ourselves. Suppose a person to be in real danger, and by some means or other to have forgot it ; any trifling accident, any sound might alarm him, recall the danger to his remembrance, and renew his fears : but it is almost too grossly ridiculous (though it is to show an absurdity) to speak of that sound or accident as an object

of compassion; and yet, according to Mr Hobbes, our greatest friend in distress is no more to us, no more the object of compassion or of any affection in our heart. Neither the one or the other raises any emotion in our mind, but only the thoughts of our liableness to calamity, and the fear of it: and both equally do this.

“There are often three distinct perceptions or inward feelings upon sight of persons in distress: real sorrow and concern for the misery of our fellow-creatures; some degree of satisfaction from a consciousness of our freedom from that misery; and, as the mind passes on from one thing to another, it is not unnatural from such an occasion to reflect upon our own liableness to the same or other calamities. The two last frequently accompany the first, but it is the first *only* which is properly compassion, of which the distressed are the objects, and which directly carries us with calmness and thought to their assistance. Any one of these, from various and complicated reasons, may in particular cases prevail over the other two; and there are, I suppose, instances where the bare *sight* of distress, without our feeling any compassion for it, may be the occasion of either or both of the two latter.”

I shall proceed to examine the objection to

the doctrine of benevolence, on the supposition that our sympathy when it exists is really a part of our interest. This objection was long ago stated by Hobbes, Rochefoucault, and Mandeville, and has been adopted and glossed over by Helvetius. It is pretended, then, that in wishing to relieve the distresses of others we only desire to remove the uneasiness which pity creates in our mind ; that all our actions are unavoidably selfish, as they all arise from the feeling of pleasure or pain existing in the mind of the individual, and that whether we intend our own good or that of others, the immediate gratification connected with the idea of any object is the sole motive which determines us to the pursuit of it.

First, this objection does not at all affect the main question in dispute. For if it is allowed that the idea of the pleasures or pains of others excites an immediate interest in the mind, if we feel sorrow and anxiety for their imaginary distresses exactly in the same way that we do for our own, and are impelled to action by the same principle, whether the action has for its object our own good, or that of others ; in a word, if we sympathise with others as we do with ourselves, the nature of man as a voluntary agent must be the same, whether we choose to call

this principle self-love, or benevolence, or whatever refinements we may introduce into our manner of explaining it. The relation of man to himself and others as a moral agent is plainly determined, whether a rational pursuit of his own future welfare and that of others is the real or only the ostensible motive of his actions. Were it not that our feelings are so strongly attached to names, the rest would be a question more of speculative curiosity than practice. All that, commonly speaking, is meant by the most disinterested benevolence is this immediate sympathy with the feelings of others, as by self-love is meant the same kind of attachment to our own future interests. For if by self-love we understand any thing beyond the impulse of the present moment, any thing different from inclination, let the object be what it will, this can no more be a mechanical thing than the most refined and comprehensive benevolence. Self-love, used in the sense which the above objection implies, must therefore mean some thing very different from an exclusive principle of deliberate, calculating selfishness, rendering us indifferent to every thing but our own advantage, or from the love of physical pleasure or aversion to physical pain, which could produce no interest in any but sensible

impressions. In a word, it expresses merely any inclination of the mind be it to what it will, and does not at all determine or limit the object of pursuit. Supposing, therefore, that our most generous feelings and actions were so far equivocal, the object only bearing a show of disinterestedness, the secret motive being always selfish, this would be no reason for rejecting the common use of the term *disinterested benevolence*, which expresses nothing more than an immediate reference of our actions to the good of others, as self-love expresses a conscious reference of them to our own good as means to an end. This is the proper meaning of the terms. If we denominate our actions not from the object in view, but from the inclination of the individual, there will be an end at once, both of "selfishness" and "benevolence."

But farther, I deny that there is any foundation for the objection itself, or any reason for resolving the feelings of compassion or our voluntary motives in general into a principle of mechanical self-love. That the motive to action exists in the mind of the person who acts, is what no one can deny, or I suppose ever meant to deny. The passion excited and the impression producing it must necessarily affect the individual. There must always be some one to feel

and act, or there could evidently be no such thing as feeling or action. If therefore it had even been implied as a condition in the love of others, that this love should not be felt by the person who loves them, this would be to say that he must love them and not love them at the same time, which is too palpable an absurdity to be thought of for a moment. It could never, I say, be imagined that in order to feel for others, we must in reality feel nothing, or that benevolence, to exist at all, must exist no where. This kind of reasoning is therefore the most arrant trifling. To call my motives or feelings selfish, because they are felt by myself, is an abuse of all language: it might just as well be said that my idea of the monument is a selfish idea, or an idea of myself, because it is I who perceive it. By a selfish feeling must be meant, therefore, a feeling, not which belongs to myself (for that all feelings do, as is understood by every one) but which *relates* to myself, and in this sense benevolence is not a selfish feeling. It is the individual who feels both for himself and others; but by self-love is meant that he feels only for himself; for it is presumed that the word *self* has some meaning in it, and it would have absolutely none at all, if nothing more were intended by it than any object or im-

pression existing in the mind. It therefore becomes necessary to set limits to the meaning of the terms. If we except the burlesque interpretation of the word just noticed, self-love can mean only one of these three things. 1. The conscious pursuit of our own good as such ; 2. The love of physical pleasure and aversion to physical pain ; 3. The gratification derived from our sympathy with others. If all our actions do not proceed from one of these three principles, they are all resolvable into self-love.

First, then, self-love may properly signify, as already explained, the love or affection excited by the idea of our own interest, and the conscious pursuit of it as a general, remote, ideal object. In this sense, that is, considered with respect to the proposed end of our actions, I have shown sufficiently that there is no exclusive principle of self-love in the human mind which constantly impels us, as a set purpose, to pursue our own advantage and nothing but that.

Secondly, any being would be strictly a selfish agent, all whose impulses were excited by mere physical pleasure or pain, and who had no sense or imagination, or anxiety about any thing but its own bodily feelings. Such a being could have no idea beyond its actual, momentary existence, and would be equally incapable of ra-

tional self-love or benevolence. But it is allowed on all hands that the wants and desires of the human mind are not confined within the limits of his bodily sensations.

Thirdly, it is said that though man is not merely a physical agent, but is naturally capable of being influenced by imagination and sympathy, yet that this does not prove him to be possessed of any degree of disinterestedness or real good-will to others; since he pursues the good of others only from its contributing to his own gratification; that is, not for their sakes, but for his own, which is still selfishness. That is, the indulgence of certain affections necessarily tends, without our thinking of it, to our own immediate gratification, and the impulse to prolong a state of pleasurable feeling and put a stop to whatever gives the mind the least uneasiness, is the real spring and over-ruling principle of our actions. If our benevolence and sympathy with others arose out of and was entirely regulated by this principle of self-gratification, then these might indeed be with justice regarded as the ostensible accidental motives of our actions, as the form or vehicle which served only to transmit the efficacy of any other hidden principle, as the mask and cover of selfishness. But the supposition itself is the absurdest that can

well be conceived. Self-love and sympathy are inconsistent. The instant we no longer suppose man to be a physical agent, and allow him to have ideas of things out of himself and to be influenced by them, that is, to be endued with sympathy at all, he must necessarily cease to be a merely selfish agent. The instant he is supposed to conceive and to be affected by the ideas of other things, he cannot be wholly governed by what relates to himself. The terms "selfish" and "natural agent" are a contradiction. For the one expression implies that the mind is actuated solely by the impulse of self-love, and the other that it is in the power and under the control of other motives. If our sympathy with others does not always originate in the pleasure with which it is accompanied to ourselves, or does not cease the moment it becomes troublesome to us, then man is not entirely and necessarily the creature of self-love. He is under another law and another necessity, and in spite of himself is forced out of the direct line of his own interest, both future and present, by other principles inseparable from his nature as an intelligent being. Our sympathy therefore is not the servile, ready tool of our self-love, but this latter principle is itself subservient to and over-ruled by the former; that is, an attachment to others

is a réal independent principle of human action. What I wish to state is this: that the mind neither constantly aims at nor tends to its own individual interest. That in benevolence, compassion, friendship, &c. the mind does aim at its good, is what every one must acknowledge. The only sense then in which our sympathy with others can be construed into self-love, must be that the mind is so constituted that without forethought or any reflection in itself, or when seeming most occupied with others, it is still governed by the same universal feeling of which it is wholly unconscious; and that we indulge in compassion, &c. only because and in as far as it coincides with our own immediate gratification. If it could be shown that the current of our desires always runs the same way, either with or without knowledge, I should confess that this would be a strong presumption of what has been called the falsity of human virtue. But it is not true that such is the natural disposition of the mind. It is not so constructed as to receive no impressions but those which gratify its desire of happiness, or to throw off every the least uneasiness relating to others, like oil from water. It is not true that the feelings of others have no natural hold upon the mind but by their connexion with self-interest. Nothing can be more

evident than that we do not on any occasion blindly consult the interest of the moment; there is no instinctive unerring bias to our own good, which in the midst of contrary motives and doubtful appearances, puts aside all other impulses and guides them but to its own purposes. It is against all experience to say that in giving way to the feelings of sympathy, any more than to those of rational self-interest (for the argument is the same in both cases), I always yield to that impulse which is accompanied with most pleasure at the time. It is true that I yield to the strongest impulse, but not that my strongest impulse is to pleasure. The idea, for instance, of the relief I may afford to a person in extreme distress, is not necessarily accompanied by a correspondent degree of pleasurable sensation to counterbalance the painful sensation his immediate distress occasions in my mind. It is certain that sometimes the one and sometimes the other may prevail without altering my purpose in the least. I am led to persevere in it by the idea of what are the sufferings, and that it is in my power to alleviate them: though that idea is not always the most agreeable contemplation I could have. Those who voluntarily perform the most painful duties of friendship or humanity do not do them from the immediate gratification

arising therefrom ; it is as easy to turn away from a beggar as to relieve him ; and if the mind were not actuated by a sense of truth, and of the real consequences of its actions, we should uniformly listen to the distresses of others with the same sort of feeling as we go to see a tragedy, only because we calculate that the pleasure is greater than the pain. But I appeal to every one whether this is a true account of human nature. There is indeed a false and bastard kind of feeling commonly called sensibility, which is governed altogether by this reaction of pity on our own minds, and which instead of disproving only serves more strongly to distinguish the true. Upon the theory here stated the mind is supposed to be imperceptibly attached to or to fly from every idea or impression simply as it affects it with pleasure or pain : all other impulses are carried into effect or remain powerless according as they touch this great spring of human affection, which determines every other movement and operation of the mind. Why then do we not reject at first every tendency to what may give us pain ? Why do we sympathise with the distresses of others at all ?

“ The jealous God at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings and in a moment flies.”

Why does not our self-love in like manner, if it is so perfectly indifferent and unconcerned a principle as it is represented, immediately disentangle itself from every feeling or idea which it finds becoming painful to it? It should seem we are first impelled by self-love to feel uneasiness at another's sufferings, in order that the same principle of tender concern for ourselves may afterwards impel us to get rid of that uneasiness by endeavouring to remove the suffering which is the cause of it. In desiring to relieve the distress of another, it is pretended that our only wish is to remove the uneasiness it occasions us: do we also feel this uneasiness in the first instance for the same reason, or from regard to ourselves! It is absurd to say that in compassionating others I am only occupied with my own pain or uneasiness, since this very uneasiness arises from my compassion. It is to take the effect for the cause. One half of the process, namely, our connecting the sense of pain with the idea of it, has evidently nothing to do with self-love: nor do I see any more reason for ascribing the active impulse which follows to this principle, since it does not tend to remove the idea of the object as it gives *me* pain, or as it actually affects *myself*, but as it is supposed to affect another. Self, mere positive

self, is entirely forgotten, both practically and consciously. The effort of the mind is not to remove the idea or the immediate feeling of pain as an abstract impression of the individual, but as it represents the pain which another feels, and is connected with the idea of another's pain. So long then as this imaginary idea of what another feels excites my sympathy with him, as it fixes my attention on his sufferings, however painful, as it impels me to his relief, and to employ the necessary means for that purpose, at the expense of my ease and satisfaction, that is, so long as I am interested for others, it is not true that my only concern is for myself, or that I am governed solely by the principles of self-interest. Abstract our sympathy as it were from itself, and resolve it into another principle, and it will no longer produce the effects which we constantly see it produce wherever it exists. Let us suppose, for a moment, that the sensations of others were embodied by some means or other with our own, that we felt for them exactly as for ourselves, would not this give us a real sympathy in them, and extend our interests and identity beyond ourselves? Would the motives and principles by which we are actuated be the same as before? But the imagination, though not in the same degree, produces the same

effects: it modifies and overrules the impulses of self-love, and binds us to the interests of others as to our own. If the imagination gives us an artificial interest in the welfare of others, if it determines my feelings and actions, and if it even for a moment draws them off from the pursuit of an abstract principle of self-interest, then it cannot be maintained that self-love and benevolence are the same. The motives that give birth to our social affections are by means of the understanding as much regulated by the feelings of others as if we had a real communication and sympathy with them, and are swayed by an impulse altogether foreign to self-love. If it should be said, that after all we are as selfish as we can be, and that the modifications and restrictions of the principle of self-love are only a necessary consequence of the nature of a thinking being, I answer, that this is the very point I wish to establish; or that it is downright nonsense to talk of a principle of entire selfishness in connexion with a power of reflection, that is, with a mind capable of perceiving the consequences of things beyond itself, and of being affected by them.

Should any desperate metaphysician persist in affirming that my love of others is still the

love of myself, because the impression exciting my sympathy must exist in my mind, and so be a part of myself, I would answer that this is using words without affixing any distinct meaning to them. The love or affection excited by any general idea existing in my mind, can no more be said to be the love of myself, than the idea of another person is the idea of myself, because it is I who perceive it. This method of reasoning, however, will not go a great way to prove the doctrine of an abstract principle of self-interest; for, by the same rule, it would follow that in hating another person I hate myself. Indeed, upon this principle, the whole structure of language is a continued absurdity. It is pretended by a violent assumption, that benevolence is only a desire to prolong the idea of another's pleasure in one's own mind, because the idea exists there: malevolence must, therefore, be a disposition to prolong the idea of pain in one's own mind for the same reason, that is, to injure oneself, for by this philosophy no one can have a single idea which does not refer to, nor any impulse which does not originate in, self. But the love of others cannot be built on the love of self, considering this last as the effect of "physical sensibility;" and the moment

we resolve self-love into the rational pursuit of a remote object, it has been shown that the same reasoning applies to both, and that the love of others has the same necessary foundation in the human mind as the love of ourselves.

I have endeavoured to prove that there is no real, physical, or essential difference between the motives by which we are naturally impelled to the pursuit of our own welfare and that of others. The truth of this paradox, great as it seems, may be brought to a very fair test: namely, the being able to demonstrate that the doctrine of self-interest, as it is commonly understood, is in the nature of things an absolute impossibility; and, the being able to account for that hypothesis,—that is, for the common feeling and motives of men from habits, and a confused association of ideas aided by the use of language. If others cannot answer my reasons, and if I can account for their prejudices, I should not be justified in hastily relinquishing my opinion, merely on account of its singularity. It may not be improper briefly to recapitulate the former argument as far as it proceeded. I am far from denying that there is a difference between real or physical impulses and ideal motives, but I contend that this distinction is quite beside the present

purpose. For self-love properly relates to action, and all action relates to the future, and all future objects are ideal, and the interest we take in all such objects, and the motives to the pursuit of them are ideal too. The distinction between self-love and benevolence, therefore, as separate principles of action, cannot be founded on the difference between real and imaginary objects, between physical and rational motives, inasmuch as the motives and objects of the one and the other are equally ideal things. Whether we voluntarily pursue our own good or that of another, we must inevitably pursue that which is at a distance from us, something out of ourselves, abstracted from the being that acts and wills, and that is incompatible always with our present sensation or physical existence. Self-love, therefore, as the actuating principle of the mind, must imply the efficacy and operation of the imagination of the remote ideas of things, as connected with voluntary action, and the most refined benevolence, the greatest sacrifices of natural affection, of sincerity, of friendship, or humanity, can imply nothing more. The notion of the necessity of actual objects or impressions as the motives to action could not so easily have gained ground as an article of philosophical faith, but from a perverse distinction of the

use of the idea to abstract definitions or external forms, having no reference to the feelings or passions; and again from associating the word *imagination* with merely fictitious situations and events such as never have a real existence, and which consequently do not admit of action. If then self-love, even the most gross and palpable, can only subsist in a rational and intellectual nature, not circumscribed within the narrow limits of animal life, or of the ignorant present time, but capable of giving life and interest to the forms of its own creatures, to the unreal mockeries of future things, to that shadow of itself which the imagination sends before; is it not the height of absurdity to stop here, and poorly and pitifully to suppose that this pervading power must bow down and worship this idol of its own making, and become its blind and servile drudge, and that it cannot extend its creatures as widely around it, as it projects them forward, that it cannot breathe into all other forms the breath of life, and endow even sympathy with vital warmth, and diffuse the soul of morality through all the relations and sentiments of human life? Take away the real, physical, mechanical principle of self-interest, and it will have no basis to rest upon, but that which it has in common with every principle of

natural justice or humanity. That there is no real, physical, or mechanical principle of selfishness in the mind, has been abundantly proved. All that remains is, to show how the continued identity of the individual with himself has given rise to the notion of self-interest, which after what has been premised will not be a very difficult task. What I shall attempt to show will be, that individuality expresses not either absolute unity or real identity, but properly such a particular relation between a number of things as produces an immediate or continued connexion between them, and a correspondent marked separation between them and other things. Now, in coexisting things, one part may by means of this communication mutually act and be acted upon by others, but where the connexion is continued, or in successive identity of the individual, though what follows may depend intimately on what has gone before, that is, be acted upon by it, it cannot react upon it; that is, the identity of the individual with itself can only relate practically to its connexion with its past, and not with its future self.

Every human being is distinguished from every other human being, both numerically and characteristically. He must be numerically

distinct by the supposition, or he would not be another individual, but the same. There is, however, no contradiction in supposing two individuals to possess the same absolute properties: but then these original properties must be differently modified afterwards from the necessary difference of their situations, unless we conceive them both to occupy the same relative situation in two distinct systems, corresponding exactly with each other. In fact, every one is found to differ essentially from every one else; if not in original qualities, in the circumstances and events of their lives, and consequently in their ideas and characters. In thinking of a number of individuals, I conceive of them all as differing in various ways from one another as well as from myself. They differ in size, in complexion, in features, in the expression of their countenances, in age, in occupation, in manners, in knowledge, in temper, in power. It is this perception or apprehension of their real differences that first enables me to distinguish the several individuals of the species from each other, and that seems to give rise to the most obvious idea of individuality, as representing, first, positive number, and, secondly, the sum of the differences between one being and

another, as they really exist, in a greater or less degree in nature, or as they would appear to exist to an impartial spectator, or to a perfectly intelligent mind. But *I* am not in reality more different from others than any one individual is from any other individual, neither do I in fact suppose myself to differ really from them otherwise than as they differ from each other. What is it then that makes the difference seem greater *to me*, or that makes me feel a greater change in passing from my own idea to that of another person, than in passing from the idea of another person to that of any one else? Neither my existing as a separate being, nor my differing from others, is of itself sufficient to account for the idea of self, since I might equally perceive others to exist and compare their actual differences without ever having this idea.

Farther, individuality is sometimes used to express not so much the absolute difference or distinction between one individual and another, as a relation or comparison of that individual with itself, whereby we tacitly affirm that it is in some way or other the same with itself, or one idea. Now in one sense it is true of all existencies whatever that they are literally the same with themselves; that is, they are what

they are, and not something else. Each thing is itself, is that individual thing, and no other; and each combination of things is that combination, and no other. So also each individual conscious being is necessarily the same with himself; or in other words, that combination of ideas which represents any individual person is that combination of ideas, and not a different one. This literal and verbal is the only true and absolute identity which can be affirmed of any individual; which, it is plain, does not arise from a comparison of the different parts or successive impressions composing the general idea one with another, but each with itself or all of them taken together with the whole. I cannot help thinking that some idea of this kind is frequently at the bottom of the perplexity which is felt by most people who are not metaphysicians (not to mention those who are), when they are told that man is not always the same with himself, their notion of identity being that he must always be what he is. He is the same with himself, in as far as he is not another. When they say that the man is the same being in general, they do not really mean that he is the same at twenty that he is at sixty, but their general idea of him includes both these extremes, and therefore the same man, that is, the

same collective idea, is both the one and the other. This however is but a rude logic. Not well understanding the process of distinguishing the same individual into different metaphysical sections, to compare, collate, and set one against the other (so awkwardly do we at first apply ourselves to the analytical art), to get rid of the difficulty the mind produces a double-individual, part real and part imaginary, or repeats the same idea twice over; in which case it is a contradiction to suppose that the one does not correspond exactly with the other in all its parts. There is no other absolute identity in the case. All individuals (or all that we name such) are aggregates, and aggregates of dissimilar things. Here, then, the question is not how we distinguish one individual from another, or a number of things from a number of other things, which distinction is a matter of absolute truth, but how we come to confound a number of things together, and consider many things as the same, which cannot be strictly true. This idea must then merely relate to such a connexion between a number of things as determines the mind to consider them as one whole, each part having a much nearer and more lasting connexion with the rest than with any thing else not included in the same collective

idea. (It is obvious that the want of this close affinity and intimate connexion between any number of things is what so far produces a correspondent distinction and separation between one individual and another.) The eye is not the same thing as the ear; it is a contradiction to call it so. Yet both are parts of the same body, which contains these and infinite other distinctions. The reason of this is, that all the parts of the eye have evidently a distinct nature, a separate use, a greater mutual dependence on one another than on those of the ear; at the same time that there is a considerable connexion between the eye and the ear, as parts of the same body and organs of the same mind. Similarity is in general but a subordinate circumstance in determining this relation. For the eye is certainly more like the same organ in another individual, than the different organs of sight and hearing are like one another in the same individual. Yet we do not, in making up the imaginary individual, associate our ideas according to this analogy, which would answer no more purpose than the things themselves would, so separated and so united; but we think of them in that order in which they are mechanically connected together in nature, and in which alone they can serve to any practical purpose.

However, it seems hardly possible to define the different degrees or kinds of identity in the same thing by any general rule. The nature of the thing will best point out the sense in which it is to be the same. Individuality may relate either to absolute unity, to the identity or similarity of the parts of any thing, or to an extraordinary degree of connexion between things neither the same, nor similar. This last sense principally determines the positive use of the word, at least with respect to man and other organized beings. Indeed, the term is hardly ever applied in common language to other things.

To insist on the first circumstance, namely, absolute unity, as essential to individuality, would be to destroy all individuality; for it would lead to the supposition of as many distinct individuals as there are thoughts, feelings, actions, and properties in the same being. Each thought would be a separate consciousness, each organ a different system. Each thought is a distinct thing in nature; but the individual is composed of numberless thoughts and various faculties, and contradictory passions, and mixed habits, all curiously woven, and blended together in the same conscious being.

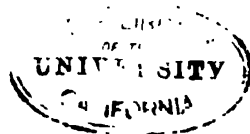
But to proceed to a more particular account of the origin of the idea of self, which is the connexion

of a being with itself. This can only be known in the first instance from reflecting on what passes in our own minds. I should say that individuality in this sense does not arise either from the absolute simplicity of the mind, or from its identity with itself, or from its diversity from other minds, which are not in the least necessary to it, but from the peculiar and intimate connexion which subsists between the several faculties and perceptions of the same thinking being constituted as man is; so that, as the subject of his own reflection or consciousness, the same things impressed on any of his faculties produce a quite different effect upon him from what they would do, if they were impressed in the same way on any other being. The sense of personality seems then to depend entirely on the particular consciousness which the mind has of its own operations, sensations, or ideas. Self is nothing but the limits of the mind's consciousness; as far as that reaches it extends, and where that can go no further, it ceases. The mind is one, from the confined sphere in which it acts; or because it is not all things. It is nearer and more present to itself than to other minds. What passes within it, what acts upon it immediately from without, of this it cannot help being conscious; and this

consciousness is continued in it afterwards, more or less perfectly. All that does not come within this sphere of personal consciousness, all that has never come within it, is equally without the verge of self; for that word relates solely to the difference of the manner, or the different degrees of force and certainty with which, from the imperfect and limited nature of our faculties, certain things affect us as they act immediately upon ourselves, and are supposed to act upon others. Hence it is evident that personality itself cannot extend to futurity; for the whole of this idea depends on the peculiar force and directness with which certain impulses act upon the mind. It is by comparing the knowledge I have of my own impressions, ideas, feelings, powers, &c. with my knowledge of the same or similar impressions, ideas, &c. in others, and with this still more imperfect conception that I form of what passes in their minds when this is supposed to be entirely different from what passes in my own, that I acquire the general notion of self. If I could form no idea of any thing passing in the minds of others, or if my ideas of their thoughts and feelings were perfect representations, *i. e.* mere conscious repetitions of them, all personal distinction would be lost either in pure sensation or in perfect universal sympathy. In the one

case it would be impossible for me to prefer myself to others, as I should be the sole object of my own consciousness; and in the other case I must love all others as myself, because I should then be nothing more than a part of a whole, of which all others would be equally members with myself. This distinction, however, subsists as necessarily and completely between myself and those who most nearly resemble me, as between myself and those whose characters and properties are the very opposite to mine. Indeed, the distinction itself becomes marked and intelligible in proportion as the objects or impressions themselves are intrinsically the same, as then it is impossible to mistake the true principle on which it is founded, namely, the want of any direct communication between the feelings of one being and those of another. This will shew why the difference between ourselves and others appears greater to us than that between other individuals, though it is not really so.

Considering mankind in this two-fold relation, as they are to themselves, or as they appear to one another, as the subjects of their own thoughts, or the thoughts of others, we shall find the origin of that wide and absolute distinction which the mind feels in comparing itself with others, to be confined to two faculties, viz.,



sensation, or rather consciousness, and memory. To avoid an endless subtilty of distinction, I have not given here any account of consciousness in general; but the same reasoning will apply to both. The operation of both these faculties is of a perfectly exclusive and individual nature, and so far as their operation extends (but no farther) is man a personal, or if you will, a selfish being. The sensation excited in me by a piece of red-hot iron striking against any part of my body is simple, absolute, terminating as it were in itself, not representing any thing beyond itself, nor capable of being represented by any other sensation, or communicated to any other being. The same kind of sensation may be indeed excited in another by the same means, but this sensation will not imply any reference to, or consciousness of mine; there is no communication between my nerves and another's brain, by which he can be affected with my sensations as I am myself. The only notice or perception which another can have of this sensation in me, or which I can have of a similar sensation in another, is by means of the imagination. I can form an imaginary idea of that pain as existing out of myself; but I can only feel it as a sensation when it is actually impressed on myself. Any impression

made on another can neither be the cause nor object of sensation to me. Again, the impression or idea left in my mind by this sensation, and afterwards excited either by seeing iron in the same state, or by any other means, is properly an idea of memory. This recollection necessarily refers to some previous impression in my own mind, and only exists in consequence of that impression, or of the continued connexion of the same mind with itself: it cannot be derived from any impression made on another. My thoughts have a particular mechanical dependence only on my own previous thoughts or sensations. I do not remember the feelings of any one but myself. I may, indeed, remember the objects which must have caused such and such feelings in others, or the outward signs of passion which accompanied them. These, however, are but the recollections of my own immediate impressions of what I saw, and I can only form an idea of the feelings themselves by means of the imagination. But, though we take away all power of imagination from the human mind, my own feelings must leave behind them certain traces, or representations of themselves retaining the same general properties, and having the same intimate connexion with the conscious principle. On the

other hand, if I wish to anticipate my own future feelings, whatever these may be, I must do so by means of the same faculty by which I conceive of those of others, whether past or future. I have no distinct or separate faculty on which the events and feelings of my future being are impressed before hand, and which shows, as in an enchanted mirror, to me, and me alone, the reversed picture of my future life. It is absurd to suppose that the feelings which I am to have hereafter, should excite certain correspondent impressions of themselves before they have existed, or act mechanically upon my mind by a secret sympathy. The romantic sympathies of lovers, the exploded dreams of judicial astrology, the feats of magic, do not equal the solid, substantial absurdity of this doctrine of self-interest, which attributes to that which is not and has not been, a mechanical operation and a reality in nature. I can only abstract myself from this present being, and take an interest in my future being, in the same sense and manner in which I can go out of myself entirely, and enter into the minds and feelings of others. In short, there neither is nor can be any principle belonging to the individual that antecedently identifies his future events with his present sensation, or that reflects

the impression of his future feelings backwards with the same kind of consciousness that his past feelings are transmitted forwards through the channels of memory. The size of the river as well as its taste depends on the water that has already fallen into it. I cannot roll back its course, nor is the stream next the source affected by the water which falls into it afterwards, yet we call both the same river. Such is the nature of personal identity. It is founded on the continued connexion of cause and effect, and awaits their gradual progress, and does not consist in a preposterous and wilful unsettling of the natural order of things. There is an illustration of this argument, which, however quaint or singular it may appear, I rather choose to give than omit any thing which may serve to make my meaning clear and intelligible. Suppose then a number of men employed to cast a mound into the sea. As far as it has gone, the workmen pass backwards and forwards on it: it stands firm in its place, and though it advances further and further from the shore, it is still joined to it. A man's personal identity and self-interest have just the same principle and extent, and can reach no farther than his actual existence. But if any man of a metaphysical turn, seeing that the pier was not yet finished,

but was to be continued to a certain point, and in a certain direction, should take it into his head to insist that what was already built, and what was to be built were the same pier, that the one must therefore afford as good footing as the other, and should accordingly walk over the pier-head on the solid foundation of his metaphysical hypothesis—he would act a great deal more ridiculously, but would not argue a whit more absurdly than those who found a principle of absolute self-interest on a man's future identity with his present being. But, say you, the comparison does not hold in this, that a man can extend his thoughts (and that very wisely too), beyond the present moment, whereas in the other case he cannot move a single step forwards. Grant it. This will only show that the mind has wings as well as feet, which is a sufficient answer to the selfish hypothesis.

If the foregoing account be true (and for my part, the only perplexity that crosses my mind in thinking of it arises from the utter impossibility of conceiving of the contrary supposition), it will follow that those faculties which may be said to constitute self, and the operations of which convey that idea to the mind, draw all their materials from the past and pre-

sent. But all voluntary action, as I have before largely shown, must relate solely and exclusively to the future. That is, all those impressions or ideas with which selfish, or more properly speaking, personal feelings must be naturally connected are just those which have nothing to do at all with the motives to action in the pursuit either of our own interest, or that of others. If indeed it were possible for the human mind to alter the present or the past, so as either to recal what was past, or to give it a still greater reality, to make it exist over again, and in some more emphatical sense, then man might, with some pretence of reason, be supposed naturally incapable of being impelled to the pursuit of any *past* or *present* object but from the mechanical excitement of personal motives. It might in this case be pretended that the impulses of imagination and sympathy are of too light, unsubstantial, and remote a creation to influence our real conduct, and that nothing is worthy of the concern of a wise man in which he has not this direct, unavoidable, and homefelt interest. This is, however, too absurd a supposition to be dwelt on for a moment. The only proper objects of voluntary action are (by necessity) future events: these can excite no possible interest in

the mind but by the aid of the imagination: and these make the same direct appeal to that faculty, whether they relate to ourselves or to others, as the eye receives with equal directness the impression of our own external form or that of others. It will be easy to perceive by this train of reasoning how, notwithstanding the contradiction involved in the supposition of a generally absolute self-interest, the mind comes to feel a deep and habitual conviction of the truth of this principle. Finding in itself a continued consciousness of its past impressions, it is naturally enough disposed to transfer the same sort of identity and consciousness to the whole of its being. The objects of imagination and of the senses are, as it were, perpetually playing into one another's hands, and shifting characters, so that we lose our reckoning, and do not think it worth while to mark where the one ends and the other begins. As our actual being is constantly passing into our future being, and carries the internal feeling of consciousness along with it, we seem to be already identified with our future being in this permanent part of our nature, and to feel by a mutual impulse the same necessary sympathy with our future selves that we know we shall have with our past selves. We take the tablets

of memory, reverse them, and stamp the image of self on that which as yet possesses nothing but the name. It is no wonder then that the imagination, constantly disregarding the progress of time, when its course is marked out along the straight unbroken line of individuality, should confound the necessary differences of things, and convert a distant object into a present reality. The interest which is hereafter to be felt by this continued conscious being, this indefinite unit, called *me*, seems necessarily to affect me in every state of my existence,—“thrills in each nerve, and lives along the line.” In the first place we abstract the successive modifications of our being, and *particular* temporary interests, into one simple nature and general principle of self-interest, and then make use of this nominal abstraction as an artificial medium to compel those particular actual interests into the closest affinity and union with each other, as different lines meeting in the same centre must have a mutual communication with each other. On the contrary, as I always remain perfectly distinct from others (the interest which I take in their former or present feelings being like that which I take in their future feelings, never any thing more than the effect of imagination and sympathy), the same illusion

and transposition of ideas cannot take place with regard to these ; namely, the confounding a physical impulse with the rational motives to action. Indeed the uniform nature of my feelings with regard to others (my interest in their welfare having always the same source and sympathy) seems by analogy to confirm the supposition of a similar simplicity in my relation to myself, and of a positive, natural, absolute interest in whatever belongs to that self, not confined to my actual existence, but extending over the whole of my being. Every sensation that I feel, or that afterwards recurs vividly to my memory strengthens the sense of self, which increased strength in the mechanical feeling is indirectly transferred to the general idea, and to my remote, future, imaginary interest ; whereas our sympathy with the feelings of others being always imaginary, standing only on its own basis, having no sensible interest to support it, no restless mechanical impulse to urge it on, the ties by which we are bound to others hang loose upon us : the interest we take in their welfare seems to be something foreign to our own bosoms, to be transient, arbitrary, and directly opposed to that necessary, unalienable interest we are supposed to have in whatever conduces to our own well being.

There is another consideration (and that probably the principal one) to be taken into the account in explaining the origin and growth of our selfish habits, which is perfectly consistent with the foregoing theory, and evidently arises out of it. There is naturally, then, no essential difference between the motives by which I am impelled to the pursuit of my own good or that of others: but though there is not a difference in kind, there is one in degree. We know better what our own future feelings will be than what those of others will be in a like case. We can apply the materials afforded us by experience with less difficulty and more in a mass in making out the picture of our future pleasures and pains, without frittering them away or destroying their original sharpnesses: in a word, we can imagine them more plainly, and must therefore be more interested in them. This facility in passing from the recollection of my former impressions to the anticipation of my future ones makes the transition almost imperceptible, and gives to the latter an apparent reality and presentness to the imagination, to a degree in which the feelings of others can scarcely ever be brought home to us. It is chiefly from this greater readiness and certainty with which we can look forward into our own minds

than out of us into those of other men, that that strong and uneasy attachment to self, which often comes at last to overpower every generous feeling, takes its rise; not, as I think I have shown, from any natural and impenetrable hardness of the human heart, or necessary absorption of all its thoughts and purposes in a blind exclusive feeling of self interest. It confirms this account, that we constantly are found to feel for others in proportion as we know from long acquaintance with the turn of their minds, and events of their lives, "the hair-breadth scapes" of their travelling history, or "some disastrous stroke which their youth suffered," what the real nature of their feelings is; and that we have in general the strongest attachment to our immediate relatives and friends, who from this intercommunity of thoughts and feelings may more truly be said to be a part of ourselves than from even the ties of blood. Moreover, a man must be employed more usually in providing for his own wants and his own feelings than those of others. In like manner he is employed in providing for the immediate welfare of his family and connexions much more than in providing for the welfare of those who are not bound by any positive ties. And we accordingly find that the attention, time, and

pains bestowed on these several objects give him a proportionable degree of anxiety about, and attachment to his own interest, and that of those connected with him; but it would be absurd to conclude that his affections, are therefore circumscribed by a natural necessity within certain impassable limits, either in the one case or the other. It should not be forgotten here that this absurd opinion has been very commonly referred to the effects of natural affection as it has been called, as well as of self-interest: parental and filial affection being supposed to be originally implanted in the mind by the ties of nature, and to move round the centre of self-interest in an orbit of their own, within the circle of our families and friends. This general connexion between the habitual pursuit of any object and our interest in it, will account for the well-known observation, that the affection of parents to children is the strongest of all others, frequently overpowering self-love itself. This fact does not seem easily reconcilable to the doctrine that the social affections are all of them ultimately to be deduced from association, or the reputed connexion of immediate selfish gratification with the idea of some other person. If this were strictly the case we must feel the strongest attachment to those from whom we had received, instead of

those to whom we had done, the greatest number of kindnesses, or where the greatest quantity of actual enjoyment had been associated with an indifferent idea. Junius has remarked that friendship is not conciliated by the power of conferring benefits, but by the equality with which they are received and may be returned.

I have hitherto purposely avoided saying any thing on the subject of our physical appetites and the manner in which they may be thought to affect the principle of the foregoing reasonings. They evidently seem at first sight, to contradict the general conclusion which I have endeavoured to establish, as they all of them tend either exclusively or principally to the gratification of the individual, and at the same time refer to some future or imaginary object, as the source of this gratification. The impulse which they give to the will is mechanical, and yet this impulse, blind as it is, constantly tends to and coalesces with the pursuit of some rational end. That is, here is an end aimed at, the desire and regular pursuit of a known good, and all this produced by motives evidently mechanical, and which never impel the mind but in a selfish direction: it makes no difference in the question whether the active impulse proceed directly from the

desire of positive enjoyment, or a wish to get rid of some positive uneasiness. I should say then that, setting aside what is of a purely physical nature in the case, the influence of appetite over our volitions may be accounted for consistently enough with the foregoing hypothesis, from the natural effects of a particularly irritable state of bodily feeling, rendering the idea of that which will heighten and gratify its susceptibility of pleasurable feeling, or remove some painful feeling, proportionably vivid, and the object of a more vehement desire than can be excited by the same idea, when the body is supposed to be in a state of indifference, or only ordinary sensibility to that particular kind of gratification. Thus the imaginary desire is sharpened by constantly receiving supplies of pungency, from the irritation of bodily feeling, and its direction is at the same time determined according to the bias of this new impulse; first, indirectly by having the attention fixed on our own immediate sensation; secondly, because that particular gratification, the desire of which is increased by the pressure of physical appetite, must be referred primarily and by way of distinction to the same being, by whom the want of it is felt, that is, to myself. As the actual uneasiness which appetite implies can only be excited by the irritable state of my

own body, so neither can the desire of the correspondent gratification subsist in that intense degree, which properly constitutes appetite, except when it tends to relieve that very same uneasiness by which it was excited, as in the case of hunger. There is in the first place the strong mechanical action of the nervous and muscular systems co-operating with the rational desire of my own belief, and forcing it its own way. Secondly, this state of uneasiness grows more and more violent, the longer the relief which it requires is withheld from it: hunger takes no denial, it hearkens to no compromise, is soothed by no flattery, tired out by no delay. It grows more importunate every moment, its demands become larger the less they are attended to. The first impulse which the general love of personal ease receives from bodily pain will give it the advantage over my disposition to sympathise with others in the same situation with myself, and this difference will be increasing every moment, till the pain is removed. Thus, if I at first, either through compassion or by an effort of the will, am regardless of my own wants, and wholly bent upon satisfying the more pressing wants of my companions, yet this effort will at length become too great, and I shall be incapable of attending to any thing but the violence of

my own sensations, or the means of alleviating them. It would be easy to show from many things that mere appetite (generally, at least, in reasonable beings) is but the fragment of a self-moving machine, but a sort of half organ, a subordinate instrument even in the accomplishment of its own purposes; that it does little or nothing without the aid of another faculty to inform and direct it. Before the impulses of appetite can be converted into the regular pursuit of a given object, they must first be communicated to the understanding, and modify the will through that. Consequently, as the desire of the ultimate gratification of the appetite is not the same with the appetite itself, that is mere physical uneasiness, but an indirect result of its communication to the thinking or imaginative principle, the influence of appetite over the will must depend on the extraordinary degree of force and vividness which it gives to the idea of a particular object; and we accordingly find that the same cause which irritates the desire of selfish gratification, increases our sensibility to the same desires and gratification in others, where they are consistent with our own, and where the violence of the physical impulse does not overpower every other consideration.

ESSAY XI.

ON THE CONDUCT OF LIFE;

OR,

ADVICE TO A SCHOOL-BOY.

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MY DEAR LITTLE FELLOW,

You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that "You durst say they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people," meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear, believe things to be right, till you find them the contrary; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as

you can, if you cannot alter them. You said "You were sure you should not like the school where you were going." This was wrong. What you meant was that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not, till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate evils; or, because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your school-fellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to you. They knew as little of you as you did of them; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship. Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others, because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them, till they behave ill to you; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticise the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your

own. Never despise any one for any thing that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will neither be the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above—“Never despise any one for any thing that he cannot help”—I might have said, “Never despise any one at all;” for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes. The sense of inferiority in others, without this indirect appeal to our self-love, is a painful feeling, and not an exulting one.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one chief reason for your being sent to school, to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs and uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to show the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal, both in the house

and among your play-fellows, with whom you were too fond of being a leader : but you have good-nature and good sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies, and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is that there are other people in the world besides yourself. There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pursuits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which therefore you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom. Remember always that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house, you might do as you pleased : in the world, you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son to destroy or dictate to millions : you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it

so at school; and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon and with as little pain as you can.

It was my misfortune perhaps to be bred up among Dissenters, who look with too jaundiced an eye at others, and set too high a value on their own peculiar pretensions. From being proscribed themselves, they learn to proscribe others; and come in the end to reduce all integrity of principle and soundness of opinion within the pale of their own little communion. Those who were out of it, and did not belong to the class of *Rational Dissenters*, I was led erroneously to look upon as hardly deserving the name of rational beings. Being thus satisfied as to the select few who are "the salt of the earth," it is easy to persuade ourselves that we are at the head of them, and to fancy ourselves of more importance in the scale of true desert than all the rest of the world put together, who do not interpret a certain text of Scripture in the manner that we have been taught to do. You will (from the difference of education) be free from this bigotry, and will, I hope, avoid every thing akin to the same exclusive and narrow-minded spirit. Think that the minds of men are various as their faces—that the modes and employments of life are numberless

as they are necessary—that there is more than one class of merit—that though others may be wrong in some things, they are not so in all—and that countless races of men have been born, have lived and died without ever hearing of any one of those points in which you take a just pride and pleasure—and you will not err on the side of that spiritual pride or intellectual coxcombry which has been so often the bane of the studious and learned !

I observe you have got a way of speaking of your school-fellows as “*that* Hoare, *that* Harris,” and so on, as if you meant to mark them out for particular reprobation, or did not think them good enough for you. It is a bad habit to speak disrespectfully of others: for it will lead you to think and feel uncharitably towards them. Ill names beget ill blood. Even where there may be some repeated trifling provocation, it is better to be courteous, mild, and forbearing, than captious, impatient, and fretful. The faults of others too often arise out of our own ill-temper; or though they should be real, we shall not mend them, by exasperating ourselves against them. Treat your play-mates, as Hamlet advises Polonius to treat the players, “according to your own dignity, rather than their deserts.” If you fly out at every

thing in them that you disapprove or think done on purpose to annoy you, you lie constantly at the mercy of their caprice, rudeness, or ill-nature. You should be more your own master.

Do not begin to quarrel with the world too soon: for, bad as it may be, it is the best we have to live in—here. If railing would have made it better, it would have been reformed long ago: but as this is not to be hoped for at present, the best way is to slide through it as contentedly and innocently as we may. The worst fault it has, is want of charity: and calling *knave* and *fool* at every turn will not cure this failing. Consider (as a matter of vanity) that if there were not so many knaves and fools as we find, the wise and honest would not be those rare and shining characters that they are allowed to be; and (as a matter of philosophy) that if the world be really incorrigible in this respect, it is a reflection to make one sad, not angry. We may laugh or weep at the madness of mankind: we have no right to vilify them, for our own sakes or theirs. Misanthropy is not the disgust of the mind at human nature, but with itself; or it is laying its own exaggerated vices and foul blots at the door of others! Do not, however, mistake what I have here said. I would not have

you, when you grow up, adopt the low and sordid fashion of palliating existing abuses or of putting the best face upon the worst things. I only mean that indiscriminate, unqualified satire can do little good, and that those who indulge in the most revolting speculations on human nature, do not themselves always set the fairest examples, or strive to prevent its lower degradation. They seem rather willing to reduce it to their theoretical standard. For the rest, the very outcry that is made (if sincere) shews that things cannot be quite so bad as they are represented. The abstract hatred and scorn of vice implies the capacity for virtue: the impatience expressed at the most striking instances of deformity proves the innate idea and love of beauty in the human mind. The best antidote I can recommend to you hereafter against the disheartening effect of such writings as those of Rochefoucault, Mandeville, and others, will be to look at the pictures of Raphael and Correggio. You need not be altogether ashamed, my dear little boy, of belonging to a species which could produce such faces as those; nor despair of doing something worthy of a laudable ambition, when you see what such hands have wrought! You will, perhaps, one day have reason to thank me for this advice.

As to your studies and school-exercises, I wish you to learn Latin, French, and dancing. I would insist upon the last more particularly, both because it is more likely to be neglected, and because it is of the greatest consequence to your success in life. Every thing almost depends upon first impressions; and these depend (besides *person*, which is not in our power) upon two things, *dress* and *address*, which every one may command with proper attention. These are the small coin in the intercourse of life, which are continually in request; and perhaps you will find at the year's end, or towards the close of life, that the daily insults, coldness, or contempt, to which you have been exposed by a neglect of such superficial recommendations, are hardly atoned for by the few proofs of esteem or admiration which your integrity or talents have been able to extort in the course of it. When we habitually disregard those things which we know will ensure the favourable opinion of others, it shews we set that opinion at defiance, or consider ourselves above it, which no one ever did with impunity. An inattention to our own persons implies a disrespect to others, and may often be traced no less to a want of good-nature than of good sense. The old maxim—*Desire to please, and you will infallibly please*—

explains the whole matter. If there is a tendency to vanity and affectation on this side of the question, there is an equal alloy of pride and obstinacy on the opposite one. Slovenliness may at any time be cured by an effort of resolution, but a graceful carriage requires an early habit, and in most cases the aid of the dancing-master. I would not have you, from not knowing how to enter a room properly, stumble at the very threshold in the good graces of those on whom it is possible the fate of your future life may depend. Nothing creates a greater prejudice against any one than awkwardness. A person who is confused in manner and gesture seems to have done something wrong, or as if he was conscious of no one qualification to build a confidence in himself upon. On the other hand, openness, freedom, self-possession, set others at ease with you by shewing that you are on good terms with yourself. Grace in women gains the affections sooner, and secures them longer, than any thing else—it is an outward and visible sign of an inward harmony of soul—as the want of it in men, as if the mind and body equally hitched in difficulties and were distracted with doubts, is the greatest impediment in the career of gallantry and road to the female heart. Another thing I would

caution you against is not to pore over your books till you are bent almost double—a habit you will never be able to get the better of, and which you will find of serious ill consequence. *A stoop in the shoulders* sinks a man in public and in private estimation. You are at present straight enough, and you walk with boldness and spirit. Do nothing to take away the use of your limbs, or the spring and elasticity of your muscles. As to all worldly advantages, it is to the full of as much importance that your deportment should be erect and manly as your actions.

You will naturally find out all this and fall into it, if your attention is drawn out sufficiently to what is passing around you; and this will be the case, unless you are absorbed too much in books and those sedentary studies,

“Which waste the marrow, and consume the brain.”

You are, I think, too fond of reading as it is. As one means of avoiding excess in this way, I would wish you to make it a rule, never to read at meal-times, nor in company when there is any (even the most trivial) conversation going on, nor ever to let your eagerness to learn encroach upon your play-hours. Books are but one inlet of knowledge; and the pores of the mind, like those of the body, should be left open

to all impressions. I applied too close to my studies, soon after I was of your age, and hurt myself irreparably by it. Whatever may be the value of learning, health and good spirits are of more.

I would have you, as I said, make yourself master of French, because you may find it of use in the commerce of life; and I would have you learn Latin, partly because I learnt it myself, and I would not have you without any of the advantages or sources of knowledge that I possessed—it would be a bar of separation between us—and secondly, because there is an atmosphere round this sort of classical ground, to which that of actual life is gross and vulgar. Shut out from this garden of early sweetness, we may well exclaim—

“ How shall we part and wander down
Into a lower world, to this obscure
And wild? How shall we breathe in other air
Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits ?”

I do not think the Classics so indispensable to the cultivation of your intellect as on another account, which I have seen explained elsewhere, and you will have no objection to turn with me to the passage.

“ The study of the Classics is less to be regarded as an exercise of the intellect, than as

a discipline of humanity. The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding, as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views; it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear, which bows only to present power and upstart authority. Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind, which can never be occupied again. They were two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.

“ Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
Secure from flames, from envy’s fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all-involving age.
Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!”

It is this feeling more than any thing else which

produces a marked difference between the study of the ancient and modern languages, and which, by the weight and importance of the consequences attached to the former, stamps every word with a monumental firmness. By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all nations and ages."

Because, however, you have learnt Latin and Greek, and can speak a different language, do not fancy yourself of a different order of beings from those you ordinarily converse with. They perhaps know and can do more *things* than you, though you have learnt a greater variety of *names* to express the same thing by. The great object indeed of these studies is to be "a cure for a narrow and selfish spirit," and to carry the mind out of its petty and local prejudices to the idea of a more general humanity. Do not fancy, because you are intimate with Homer and Virgil, that your neighbours who can never attain the same posthumous fame are to be despised, like those impudent valets who live

in noble families and look down upon every one else. Though you are master of Cicero's 'Orations,' think it possible for a cobbler at a stall to be more eloquent than you. "But you are a scholar, and he is not." Well, then, you have that advantage over him, but it does not follow that you are to have every other. Look at the heads of the celebrated poets and philosophers of antiquity in the collection at Wilton, and you will say they answer to their works: but you will find others in the same collection whose names have hardly come down to us, that are equally fine, and cast in the same classic mould. Do you imagine that all the thoughts, genius, and capacity of those old and mighty nations are contained in a few odd volumes, to be thumbed by school-boys? This reflection is not meant to lessen your admiration of the great names to which you will be accustomed to look up, but to direct it to that solid mass of intellect and power, of which they were the most shining ornaments. I would wish you to excel in this sort of learning and to take a pleasure in it, because it is the path that has been chosen for you: But do not suppose that others do not excel equally in their line of study or exercise of skill, or

that there is but one mode of excellence in art or nature. You have got on vastly beyond the point at which you set out; but others have been getting on as well as you in the same or other ways, and have kept pace with you. What then, you may ask, is the use of all the pains you have taken, if it gives you no superiority over mankind in general? It is this—You have reaped all the benefit of improvement and knowledge yourself; and farther, if you had not moved forwards, you would by this time have been left behind. Envy no one, disparage no one, think yourself above no one. Their demerits will not piece out your deficiencies; nor is it a waste of time and labour for you to cultivate your own talents, because you cannot bespeak a monopoly of all advantages. You are more learned than many of your acquaintance who may be more active, healthy, witty, successful in business or expert in some elegant or useful art than you; but you have no reason to complain, if you have attained the object of your ambition. Or if you should not be able to compass this from a want of genius or parts, yet learn, my child, to be contented with a mediocrity of acquirements. You may still be respectable in your

conduct, and enjoy a tranquil obscurity, with more friends and fewer enemies than you might otherwise have had.

There is one almost certain drawback on a course of scholastic study, that it unfits men for active life. The *ideal* is always at variance with the *practical*. The habit of fixing the attention on the imaginary and abstracted deprives the mind equally of energy and fortitude. By indulging our imaginations on fictions and chimeras, where we have it all our own way and are led on only by the pleasure of the prospect, we grow fastidious, effeminate, lapped in idle luxury, impatient of contradiction, and unable to sustain the shock of real adversity, when it comes; as by being taken up with abstract reasoning or remote events in which we are merely passive spectators, we have no resources to provide against it, no readiness, or expedients for the occasion, or spirit to use them, even if they occur. We must think again before we determine, and thus the opportunity for action is lost. While we are considering the very best possible mode of gaining an object, we find that it has slipped through our fingers, or that others have laid rude, fearless hands upon it. The youthful tyro reluctantly discovers that the ways of the

world are not his ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts. Perhaps the old monastic institutions were not in this respect unwise, which carried on to the end of life the secluded habits and romantic associations with which it began, and which created a privileged world for the inhabitants, distinct from the common world of men and women. You will bring with you from your books and solitary reveries a wrong measure of men and things, unless you correct it by careful experience and mixed observation. You will raise your standard of character as much too high at first as from disappointed expectation it will sink too low afterwards. The best qualifier of this theoretical *mania* and of the dreams of poets and moralists (who both treat of things as *they ought to be* and not as *they are*) is in one sense to be found in some of our own popular writers, such as our Novelists and periodical Essayists. But you had, after all, better wait and see what things are than try to anticipate the results. You know more of a road by having travelled it than by all the conjectures and descriptions in the world. You will find the business of life conducted on a much more varied and individual scale than you would expect. People will be concerned about a thousand things that you have

no idea of, and will be utterly indifferent to what you feel the greatest interest in. You will find good and evil, folly and discretion more mingled, and the shades of character running more into each other than they do in the ethical charts. No one is equally wise or guarded at all points, and it is seldom that any one is quite a fool. Do not be surprised, when you go out into the world, to find men talk exceedingly well on different subjects, who do not derive their information immediately from books. In the first place, the light of books is diffused very much abroad in the world in conversation and at second-hand; and besides, common sense is not a monopoly, and experience and observation are sources of information open to the man of the world as well as to the retired student. If you know more of the outline and principles, he knows more of the details and "pratique part of life." A man may discuss the adventures of a campaign in which he was engaged very agreeably without having read the *Retreat of the Ten Thousand*, or give a singular account of the method of drying teas in China without being a profound chemist. It is the vice of scholars to suppose that there is no knowledge in the world but that of books. Do you avoid it, I conjure

you ; and thereby save yourself the pain and mortification that must otherwise ensue from finding out your mistake continually !

Gravity is one great ingredient in the conduct of life, and perhaps a certain share of it is hardly to be dispensed with. Few people can afford to be quite unaffected. At any rate, do not put your worst qualities foremost. Do not seek to distinguish yourself by being ridiculous ; nor entertain that miserable ambition to be the sport and butt of the company. By aiming at a certain standard of behaviour or intellect, you will at least show your taste and value for what is excellent. There are those who *blurt* out their good things with so little heed of what they are about that no one thinks any thing of them ; as others by keeping their folly to themselves gain the reputation of wisdom. Do not, however, affect to speak only in oracles, or to deal in *bon-mots* : condescend to the level of the company, and be free and accessible to all persons. Express whatever occurs to you, that cannot offend others or hurt yourself. Keep some opinions to yourself. Say what you please of others, but never repeat what you hear said of them to themselves. If you have nothing to offer yourself, laugh with the witty, assent to the wise ; they will not think

the worse of you for it. Listen to information on subjects you are unacquainted with, instead of always striving to lead the conversation to some favourite one of your own. By the last method you will shine, but will not improve. I am ashamed myself ever to open my lips on any question I have ever written upon. It is much more difficult to be able to converse on an equality with a number of persons in turn, than to soar above their heads, and excite the stupid gaze of all companies by bestriding some senseless topic of your own and confounding the understandings of those who are ignorant of it. Be not too fond of argument. Indeed, by going much into company (which I do not, however, wish you to do) you will be weaned from this practice, if you set out with it. Rather suggest what remarks may have occurred to you on a subject than aim at dictating your opinions to others or at defending yourself at all points. You will learn more by agreeing in the main with others and entering into their trains of thinking, than by contradicting and urging them to extremities. Avoid singularity of opinion as well as of every thing else. Sound conclusions come with practical knowledge, rather than with speculative refinements: in what we really understand, we reason but little. Long-winded

disputes fill up the place of common sense and candid inquiry. Do not imagine that you will make people friends by showing your superiority over them: it is what they will neither admit nor forgive, unless you have a high and acknowledged reputation beforehand, which renders this sort of petty vanity more inexcusable. Seek to gain the good-will of others, rather than to extort their applause; and to this end, be neither too tenacious of your own claims, nor inclined to press too hard on their weaknesses.

Do not affect the society of your inferiors in rank, nor court that of the great. There can be no real sympathy in either case. The first will consider you as a restraint upon them, and the last as an intruder or *upon sufferance*. It is not a desirable distinction to be admitted into company as a man of talents. You are a mark for invidious observation. If you say nothing or merely behave with common propriety and simplicity, you seem to have no business there. If you make a studied display of yourself, it is arrogating a consequence you have no right to. If you are contented to pass as an indifferent person, they despise you; if you distinguish yourself, and show more knowledge, wit, or taste than they do, they hate you for it. You have no alternative. I would rather be asked out to

sing than to talk. Every one does not pretend to a fine voice, but every one fancies he has as much understanding as another. Indeed, the secret of this sort of intercourse has been pretty well found out. Literary men are seldom invited to the tables of the great; they send for players and musicians, as they keep monkeys and parrots!

I would not, however, have you run away with a notion that the rich are knaves or that lords are fools. They are for what I know as honest and as wise as other people. But it is a trick of our self-love, supposing that another has the decided advantage of us in one way, to strike a balance by taking it for granted (as a moral antithesis) that he must be as much beneath us in those qualities on which we plume ourselves, and which we would appropriate almost entirely to our own use. It is hard indeed if others are raised above us not only by the gifts of fortune, but of understanding too. It is not to be credited. People have an unwillingness to admit that the House of Lords can be equal in talent to the House of Commons. So in the other sex, if a woman is handsome, she is an idiot or no better than she should be: in ours, if a man is worth a million of money, he is a miser, a fellow that cannot spell his own

name, or a poor creature in some way, to bring him to our level. This is malice, and not truth. Believe all the good you can of every one. Do not measure others by yourself. If they have advantages which you have not, let your liberality keep pace with their good fortune. Envy no one, and you need envy no one. If you have but the magnanimity to allow merit wherever you see it—understanding in a lord or wit in a cobbler—this temper of mind will stand you instead of many accomplishments. Think no man too happy. Raphael died young. Milton had the misfortune to be blind. If any one is vain or proud, it is from folly or ignorance. Those who pique themselves excessively on some one thing, have but that one thing to pique themselves upon, as languages, mechanics, &c. I do not say that this is not an enviable delusion where it is not liable to be disturbed; but at present knowledge is too much diffused and pretensions come too much into collision for this to be long the case; and it is better not to form such a prejudice at first than to have it to undo all the rest of one's life. If you learn any two things, though they may put you out of conceit one with the other, they will effectually cure you of any conceit you might have of yourself, by shewing the variety and scope there is in

the human mind beyond the limits you had set to it.

You were convinced the first day that you could not learn Latin, which now you find easy. Be taught from this, not to think other obstacles insurmountable that you may meet with in the course of your life, though they seem so at first sight.

Attend above all things to your health; or rather, do nothing wilfully to impair it. Use exercise, abstinence, and regular hours. Drink water when you are alone, and wine or very little spirits in company. It is the last that are ruinous by leading to unlimited excess. There is not the same headlong *impetus* in wine. But one glass of brandy and water makes you want another, that other makes you want a third, and so on, in an increased proportion. Therefore no one can stop midway who does not possess the resolution to abstain altogether; for the inclination is sharpened with its indulgence. Never gamble. Or if you play for any thing, never do so for what will give you uneasiness the next day. Be not precise in these matters: but do not pass certain limits, which it is difficult to recover. Do nothing in the irritation of the moment, but take time to reflect. Because you have done one foolish thing, do not do another;

nor throw away your health or reputation or comfort, to thwart impertinent advice. Avoid a spirit of contradiction, both in words and actions. Do not aim at what is beyond your reach, but at what is within it. Indulge in calm and pleasing pursuits, rather than violent excitements; and learn to conquer your own will, instead of striving to obtain the mastery of that of others.

With respect to your friends, I would wish you to choose them neither from caprice nor accident, and to adhere to them as long as you can. Do not make a surfeit of friendship, through over-sanguine enthusiasm, nor expect it to last for ever. Always speak well of those with whom you have once been intimate, or take some part of the censure you bestow on them to yourself. Never quarrel with tried friends, or those whom you wish to continue such. Wounds of this kind are sure to open again. When once the prejudice is removed that sheathes defects, familiarity only causes jealousy and distrust. Do not keep on with a mockery of friendship after the substance is gone—but part, while you can part friends. Bury the carcase of friendship: it is not worth embalming.

As to the books you will have to read by

choice or for amusement, the best are the commonest. The names of many of them are already familiar to you. Read them as you grow up with all the satisfaction in your power, and make much of them. It is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life, the one you will think of longest, and repent of least. If my life had been more full of calamity than it has been (much more than I hope yours will be) I would live it over again, my poor little boy, to have read the books I did in my youth.

In politics I wish you to be an honest man, but no brawler. Hate injustice and falsehood for your own sake. Be neither a martyr, nor a sycophant. Wish well to the world without expecting to see it much better than it is; and do not gratify the enemies of liberty by putting yourself at their mercy, if it can be avoided with honour.

If you ever marry, I would wish you to marry the woman you like. Do not be guided by the recommendation of friends. Nothing will atone for or overcome an original distaste. It will only increase from intimacy; and if you are to live separate, it is better not to come together. There is no use in dragging a chain through life, unless it binds one to the object we love. Choose a mistress from among your equals. You

will be able to understand her character better, and she will be more likely to understand yours. Those in an inferior station to yourself will doubt your good intentions, and misapprehend your plainest expressions. All that you swear is to them a riddle or downright nonsense. You cannot by possibility translate your thoughts into their dialect. They will be ignorant of the meaning of half you say, and laugh at the rest. As mistresses, they will have no sympathy with you; and as wives, you can have none with them. But they will do all they can to thwart you, and to retrieve themselves in their own opinion by trick and low cunning. No woman ever married into a family above herself that did not try to make all the mischief she could in it. Be not in haste to marry, nor to engage your affections, where there is no probability of a return. Do not fancy every woman you see the heroine of a romance, a Sophia Western, a Clarissa, or a Julia; and yourself the potential hero of it, Tom Jones, Lovelace, or St Preux. Avoid this error as you would shrink back from a precipice. All your fine sentiments and romantic notions will (of themselves) make no more impression on one of these delicate creatures, than on a piece of marble. Their soft bosoms are steel to your amorous refine-

ments, if you have no other pretensions. It is not what you think of them that determines their choice, but what they think of you. Endeavour, if you would escape lingering torments and the gnawing of the worm that dies not, to find out this, and to abide by the issue. We trifle with, make sport of, and despise those who are attached to us, and follow those that fly from us. "We hunt the wind, we worship a statue, cry aloud to the desert." Do you, my dear boy, stop short in this career, if you find yourself setting out in it, and make up your mind to this, that if a woman does not like you of her own accord, that is, from involuntary impressions, nothing you can say or do or suffer for her sake will make her, but will set her the more against you. So the song goes—

"Quit, quit for shame; this will not move;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing will make her, the devil take her!"

Your pain is her triumph; the more she feels you in her power, the worse she will treat you: the more you make it appear you deserve her regard, the more will she resent it as an imputation on her first judgment. Study first impressions above all things; for every thing depends on them, in love especially. Women are armed by nature and education with a power of resisting

the importunity of men, and they use this power according to their discretion. They enforce it to the utmost rigour of the law against those whom they do not like, and relax their extreme severity proportionably in favour of those that they do like, and who in general care as little about them. Hence we see so many desponding lovers and forlorn damsels. Love in women (at least) is either vanity, or interest, or fancy. It is a merely selfish feeling. It has nothing to do (I am sorry to say) with friendship, or esteem, or even pity. I once asked a girl, the pattern of her sex in shape and mind and attractions, whether she did not think Mr Coleridge had done wrong in making the heroine of his beautiful ballad story of Geneviève take compassion on her hapless lover—

“ When on the yellow forest-leaves
A dying man he lay—”

And whether she believed that any woman ever fell in love through a sense of compassion; and she made answer—“Not if it was against her inclination!” I would take the lady’s word *for a thousand pound*, on this point. Pain holds antipathy to pleasure; pity is not akin to love; a dying man has more need of a nurse than of a mistress. There is no forcing liking. It is as

little to be fostered by reason and good-nature, as it can be controlled by prudence or propriety. It is a mere blind, headstrong impulse. Least of all, flatter yourself that talents or virtue will recommend you to the favour of the sex, in lieu of exterior advantages. Oh! no. Women care nothing about poets, or philosophers, or politicians. They go by a man's looks and manner. Richardson calls them "an eye-judging sex;" and I am sure he knew more about them than I can pretend to do. If you run away with a pedantic notion that they care a pin's-point about your head or your heart, you will repent it too late. Some blue-stocking may have her vanity flattered by your reputation or be edified by the solution of a metaphysical problem or a critical remark or a dissertation on the state of the nation, and fancy that she has a taste for intellect and is an epicure in sentiment. No true woman ever regarded any thing but her lover's person and address. Gravity will here answer all the same purpose without understanding, gaiety without wit, folly without good-nature, and impudence without any other pretension. The natural and instinctive passion of love is excited by qualities not peculiar to artists, authors, and men of letters. It is not the jest but the laugh that follows, not the sentiment but

the glance that accompanies it, that *tells*—in a word, the sense of actual enjoyment that imparts itself to others, and excites mutual understanding and inclination. Authors, on the other hand, feel nothing spontaneously. The common incidents and circumstances of life with which others are taken up, make no alteration in them, nor provoke any of the common expressions of surprise, joy, admiration, anger, or merriment. Nothing stirs their blood or accelerates their juices or tickles their veins. Instead of yielding to the first natural and lively impulses of things, in which they would find sympathy, they screw themselves up to some far-fetched view of the subject in order to be unintelligible. Realities are not good enough for them, till they undergo the process of imagination and reflection. If you offer them your hand to shake, they will hardly take it; for this does not amount to a proposition. If you enter their room suddenly, they testify neither surprise nor satisfaction: no new idea is elicited by it. Yet if you suppose this to be a repulse, you are mistaken. They will enter into your affairs or combat your ideas with all the warmth and vehemence imaginable, as soon as they have a subject started. But their faculty for thinking must be set in motion, before you can put any soul into them. They

are intellectual dram-drinkers; and without their necessary stimulus, are torpid, dead, insensible to every thing. They have great life of mind, but none of body. They do not drift with the stream of company or of passing occurrences, but are straining at some hyperbole or striking out a bye-path of their own. Follow them who list. Their minds are a sort of *Herculeanum*, full of old, petrified images;—are set in stereotype, and little fitted to the ordinary occasions of life.

What chance, then, can they have with women, who deal only in the pantomime of discourse, in gesticulation and the flippant by-play of the senses, “nods and winks and wreathed smiles;” and to whom to offer a remark is an impertinence, or a reason an affront? The only way in which I ever knew mental qualities or distinction tell was in the clerical character; and women do certainly incline to this with some sort of favourable regard. Whether it is that the sanctity of pretension piques curiosity, or that the habitual submission of their understandings to their spiritual guides subdues the will, a popular preacher generally has the choice among the *élite* of his female flock. According to Mrs Inchbald (see her ‘Simple Story’) there is another reason why

religious courtship is not without its charms! But as I do not intend you for the church, do not, in thinking to study yourself into the good graces of the fair, study yourself out of them, millions of miles. Do not place thought as a barrier between you and love: do not abstract yourself into the regions of truth, far from the smile of earthly beauty. Let not the cloud sit upon your brow: let not the canker sink into your heart. Look up, laugh loud, talk big, keep the colour in your cheek and the fire in your eye, adorn your person, maintain your health, your beauty, and your animal spirits, and you will pass for a fine man. But should you let your blood stagnate in some deep metaphysical question, or refine too much in your ideas of the sex, forgetting yourself in a dream of exalted perfection, you will want an eye to cheer you, a hand to guide you, a bosom to lean on, and will stagger into your grave, old before your time, unloved and unlovely. If you feel that you have not the necessary advantages of person, confidence, and manner, and that it is *up-hill* work with you to gain the ear of beauty, quit the pursuit at once, and seek for other satisfactions and consolations.

A spider, my dear, the meanest creature that crawls or lives, has its mate or fellow: but a

scholar has no mate or fellow. For myself, I had courted thought, I had felt pain ; and Love turned away his face from me. I have gazed along the silent air for that smile which had lured me to my doom. I no more heard those accents which would have burst upon me, like a voice from heaven. I loathed the light that shone on my disgrace. Hours, days, years, passed away ; and only turned false hope to fixed despair. And as my frail bark sails down the stream of time, the God of Love stands on the shore, and as I stretch out my hands to him in vain, claps his wings, and mocks me as I pass !

There is but one other point on which I meant to speak to you, and that is the choice of a profession. This, probably, had better be left to time or accident or your own inclination. You have a very fine ear, but I have somehow a prejudice against men-singers, and indeed against the stage altogether. It is an uncertain and ungrateful soil. All professions are bad that depend on reputation, which is "as often got without merit as lost without deserving." Yet I cannot easily reconcile myself to your being a slave to business, and I shall hardly be able to leave you an independence. A situation in a public office is secure, but laborious and me-

chanical, and without the two great springs of life, Hope and Fear. Perhaps, however, it might ensure you a competence, and leave you leisure for some other favourite amusement or pursuit. I have said all reputation is hazardous, hard to win, harder to keep. Many never attain a glimpse of what they have all their lives been looking for, and others survive a passing shadow of it. Yet if I were to name one pursuit rather than another, I should wish you to be a good painter, if such a thing could be hoped. I have failed in this myself, and should wish you to be able to do what I have not—to paint like Claude or Rembrandt or Guido or Vandyke, if it were possible. Artists, I think, who have succeeded in their chief object, live to be old, and are agreeable old men. Their minds keep alive to the last. Cosway's spirits never flagged till after ninety, and Nollekins, though nearly blind, passed all his mornings in giving directions about some group or bust in his workshop. You have seen Mr Northcote, that delightful specimen of the last age. With what avidity he takes up his pencil, or lays it down again to talk of numberless things! His eye has not lost its lustre, nor "paled its ineffectual fire." His body is a shadow: he himself is a pure spirit. There is a kind of immortality about this sort of ideal

and visionary existence that dallies with Fate and baffles the grim monster, Death. If I thought you could make as clever an artist and arrive at such an agreeable old age as Mr Northcote, I should declare at once for your devoting yourself to this enchanting profession ; and in that reliance, should feel less regret at some of my own disappointments, and little anxiety on your account !

ESSAY XII.

ON THE FINE ARTS.

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THE term Fine Arts may be viewed as embracing all those arts in which the powers of imitation or invention are exerted, chiefly with a view to the production of pleasure by the immediate impression which they make on the mind. But the phrase has of late been restricted to a narrower and more technical signification, namely, to painting, sculpture, engraving, and architecture, which appeal to the eye as the medium of pleasure; and, by way of eminence, to the two first of these arts. In the following observations, I shall adopt this limited sense of the term; and shall endeavour to develop the principles upon which the great masters have proceeded, and also to enquire in a more particular manner, into the state and

* This Essay was a contribution to the new edition of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' from which work it is, by kind permission, extracted.

probable advancement of these arts in this country. The great works of art at present extant, and which may be regarded as models of perfection in their several kinds, are the Greek statues—the pictures of the celebrated Italian masters—those of the Dutch and Flemish schools—to which we may add the comic productions of our own countryman, Hogarth. These all stand unrivalled in the history of art; and they owe their pre-eminence and perfection to one and the same principle—the *immediate imitation of nature*. This principle predominated equally in the classical forms of the antique, and in the grotesque figures of Hogarth: the perfection of art in each arose from the truth and identity of the imitation with the reality; the difference was in the subjects—there was none in the mode of imitation. Yet the advocates for the *ideal system of art* would persuade their disciples that the difference between Hogarth and the antique does not consist in the different forms of nature which they imitated, but in this, that the one is like, and the other unlike, nature. This is an error the most detrimental, perhaps, of all others, both to the theory and practice of art. As, however, the prejudice is very strong and general, and supported by the highest authority,

it will be necessary to go somewhat elaborately into the question, in order to produce an impression on the other side.

What has given rise to the common notion of the *ideal*, as something quite distinct from *actual* nature, is probably the perfection of the Greek statues. Not seeing among ourselves anything to correspond in beauty and grandeur, either with the feature or form of the limbs in these exquisite remains of antiquity, it was an obvious, but a superficial conclusion, that they must have been created from the idea existing in the artist's mind, and could not have been copied from anything existing in nature. The contrary, however, is the fact. The general form both of the face and figure, which we observe in the old statues, is not an ideal abstraction, is not a fanciful invention of the sculptor, but is as completely local and national (though it happens to be more beautiful) as the figures on a Chinese screen, or a copper-plate engraving of a negro chieftain in a book of travels. It will not be denied that there is a difference of physiognomy as well as of complexion in different races of men. The Greek form appears to have been naturally beautiful, and they had, besides, every advantage of climate, of dress, of exercise, and modes



of life to improve it. The artist had also every facility afforded him in the study and knowledge of the human form; and their religious and public institutions gave him every encouragement in the prosecution of his art. All these causes contributed to the perfection of these noble productions; but I should be inclined principally to attribute the superior symmetry of form common to the Greek statues, in the first place, to the superior symmetry of the models in nature, and, in the second, to the more constant opportunities for studying them. If we allow, also, for the superior genius of the people, we shall not be wrong; but this superiority consisted in their peculiar susceptibility to the impressions of what is beautiful and grand in nature. It may be thought an objection to what has just been said, that the antique figures of animals, &c. are as fine, and proceed on the same principles, as their statues of gods or men. But all that follows from this seems to be, that their art had been perfected in the study of the human form, the test and proof of power and skill; and was then transferred easily to the general imitation of all other objects, according to their true characters, proportions and appearances. As a confirmation of these remarks, the antique portraits of individuals were

often superior even to the personification of their gods. I think that no unprejudiced spectator of real taste can hesitate for a moment in preferring the head of the Antinous, for example, to that of the Apollo. And in general it may be laid down as a rule, that the most perfect of the antiques are the most simple,—those which affect the least action, or violence of passion,—which repose the most on natural beauty of form, and a certain expression, of sweetness and dignity, that is, which remain most nearly in that state in which they could be copied from nature without straining the limbs or features of the individual, or racking the invention of the artist. This tendency of Greek art to repose has indeed been reproached with insipidity by those who had not a true feeling of beauty and sentiment. I, however, prefer these models of habitual grace or internal grandeur to the violent distortions of suffering in the Laocoon, or even to the supercilious air of the Apollo. The Niobe, more than any other antique head, combines truth and beauty with deep passion. But here the passion is fixed, intense, habitual;—it is not a sudden or violent gesticulation, but a settled mould of features; the grief it expresses is such as might almost turn the human countenance itself *into marble!*

In general, then, I would be understood to maintain, that the beauty and grandeur so much admired in the Greek statues were not a voluntary fiction of the brain of the artist, but existed substantially in the forms from which they were copied, and by which the artist was surrounded. A striking authority in support of these observations, which has in some measure been lately discovered, is to be found in the *Elgin Marbles*, taken from the Acropolis at Athens, and supposed to be the works of the celebrated Phidias. The process of fastidious refinement and indefinite abstraction is certainly not visible there. The figures have all the ease, the simplicity, and variety, of individual nature. Even the details of the subordinate parts, the loose hanging folds in the skin, the veins under the belly or on the sides of the horses, more or less swelled as the animal is more or less in action, are given with scrupulous exactness. This is true nature and true art. In a word these invaluable remains of antiquity are precisely like casts taken from life. The *ideal* is not the preference of that which exists only in the mind to that which exists in nature; but the preference of that which is fine in nature to that which is less so. There is nothing fine in art but what is taken almost immediately, and, as it were, in the mass, from

what is finer in nature. Where there have been the finest models in nature, there have been the finest works of art.

As the Greek statues were copied from Greek forms, so Raphael's expressions were taken from Italian faces, and I have heard it remarked, that the women in the streets of Rome seem to have walked out of his pictures in the Vatican.

Sir Joshua Reynolds constantly refers to Raphael as the highest example in modern times (at least with one exception) of the grand or ideal style; and yet he makes the essence of that style to consist in the embodying of an abstract or general idea, formed in the mind of the artist by rejecting the peculiarities of individuals, and retaining only what is common to the species. Nothing can be more inconsistent than the style of Raphael with this definition. In his Cartoons, and in his groupes in the Vatican, there is hardly a face or figure which is any thing more than fine individual nature finely disposed and copied. The late Mr Barry, who could not be suspected of prejudice on this side of the question, speaks thus of them: "In Raphael's pictures (at the Vatican) of the *Dispute of the Sacrament*, and the *School of Athens*, one sees all the heads to be entirely copied from particular characters in nature, nearly proper

for the persons and situations which he adapts them to ; and he seems to me only to add and take away what may answer his purpose in little parts, features, &c. ; conceiving, while he had the head before him, ideal characters and expressions, which he adapts their features and peculiarities of face to. This attention to the particulars which distinguish all the different faces, persons, and characters, the one from the other, gives his pictures quite the verity and unaffected dignity of nature, which stamp the distinguishing differences betwixt one man's face and body and another's."

If anything is wanting to the conclusiveness of this testimony, it is only to look at the pictures themselves ; particularly the *Miracle of the Conversion*, and the *Assembly of Saints*, which are little else than a collection of divine portraits, in natural and expressive attitudes, full of the loftiest thought and feeling, and as varied as they are fine. It is this reliance on the power of nature which has produced these masterpieces by the Prince of Painters, in which expression is all in all ; where one spirit—that of truth—pervades every part, brings down heaven to earth, mingles Cardinals and Popes with angels and apostles, and yet blends and harmonizes the whole by the true touches and intense feeling of

what is beautiful and grand in nature. It is no wonder that Sir Joshua, when he first saw Raphael's pictures in the Vatican, was at a loss to discover any great excellence in them, if he was looking out for his theory of the *ideal*,—of neutral character and middle forms.

There is more an appearance of abstract grandeur of form in Michael Angelo. He has followed up, has enforced, and expanded, as it were, a preconceived idea, till he sometimes seems to tread on the verge of caricature. His forms, however, are not *middle*, but *extreme* forms, massy, gigantic, supernatural. They convey the idea of the greatest size in the figure, and in all the parts of the figure. Every muscle is swollen and turgid. This tendency to exaggeration would have been avoided if Michael Angelo had recurred more constantly to nature, and had proceeded less on a scientific knowledge of the structure of the human body; for science gives only the positive form of the different parts, which the imagination may afterwards magnify as it pleases, but it is nature alone which combines them with perfect truth and delicacy, in all the varieties of motion and expression. It is fortunate that I can refer, in illustration of my doctrine, to the admirable

fragment of the Theseus at Lord Elgin's, which shows the possibility of uniting the grand and natural style in the highest degree. The form of the limbs, as affected by pressure or action, and the general sway of the body, are preserved with the most consummate mastery. I should prefer this statue as a model for forming the style of the student to the Apollo, which strikes me as having something of a theatrical appearance; or to the Hercules, in which there is an ostentatious and overladen display of anatomy. This last figure, indeed, is so overloaded with sinews, that it has been suggested as a doubt, whether, if life could be put into it, it would be able to move. Grandeur of conception, truth of nature, and purity of taste, seem to have been at their height when the masterpieces which adorned the Temple of Minerva at Athens, of which we have only these imperfect fragments, were produced. Compared with these, the later Greek statues display a more elaborate workmanship, more of the artifices of style. The several parts are more uniformly balanced, made more to tally like modern periods; each muscle is more equally brought out, and more highly finished as a part, but not with the same subordination of each part to the whole. If some of

these wonderful productions have a fault, it is the want of that entire and naked simplicity which pervades the whole of the *Elgin Marbles*.

Having spoken here of the Greek statues, and of the works of Raphael and Michael Angelo, as far as relates to the imitation of nature, I shall attempt to point out, to the best of my ability, and as concisely as possible, what I conceive to be their general and characteristic excellences. The ancients excelled in beauty of form, Michael Angelo in grandeur of conception, Raphael in expression. In Raphael's faces, particularly his women, the expression is very superior to the form; in the ancient statues the form is the principal thing. The interest which the latter excite is in a manner external; it depends on a certain grace and lightness of appearance, joined with exquisite symmetry and refined susceptibility to voluptuous emotions; but there is in general a want of pathos. In their looks we do not read the wishings of the heart; by their beauty they seem raised above the sufferings of humanity; by their beauty they are deified. The pathos which they exhibit is rather that of present and physical distress than of deep internal sentiment. What has been remarked of Leonardo da Vinci is also true of Raphael, that there is an angelic sweetness and

tenderness in his faces, in which human frailty and passion are purified by the sanctity of religion. The ancient statues are finer objects for the eye to contemplate; they represent a more perfect race of physical beings, but we have little sympathy with them. In Raphael all our natural sensibilities are heightened and refined by the sentiments of faith and hope pointing mysteriously to the interests of another world. The same intensity of passion appears also to distinguish Raphael from Michael Angelo. Michael Angelo's forms are grander, but they are not so informed with expression. Raphael's, however ordinary in themselves, are full of expression, "even to o'erflowing;" every nerve and muscle is impregnated with feeling, —bursting with meaning. In Michael Angelo, on the contrary, the powers of body and mind appear superior to any events that can happen to them; the capacity of thought and feeling is never full, never strained, or tasked to the extremity of what it will bear. All is in a lofty repose and solitary grandeur, which no human interest can shake or disturb. It has been said that Michael Angelo painted *man*, and Raphael *men*; that the one was an epic, the other a dramatic painter. But the distinction I have stated is, perhaps, truer and more intelligible,

viz. that the one gave greater dignity of form; and the other greater force and refinement of expression. Michael Angelo, in fact, borrowed his style from sculpture. He represented in general only single figures (with subordinate accompaniments), and had not to express the conflicting actions and passions of a multitude of persons. It is therefore a mere truism to say that his compositions are not dramatic. He is much more picturesque than Raphael. The whole figure of his *Jeremiah* droops and hangs down like a majestic tree, surcharged with showers. His drawing of the human form has the characteristic freedom and boldness of Titian's landscapes.

After Michael Angelo and Raphael, there is no doubt that Leonardo da Vinci and Correggio are the two painters, in modern times, who have carried historical expression to the highest ideal perfection; and yet it is equally certain that their heads are carefully copied from faces and expressions in nature. Leonardo excelled principally in his women and children. There is, in his female heads, a peculiar charm of expression, a character of natural sweetness and tender playfulness, mixed up with the pride of conscious intellect, and the graceful reserve of personal dignity. He blends purity with voluptuousness;

and the expression of his women is equally characteristic of "the mistress or the saint." His pictures are worked up to the height of the idea he had conceived, with an elaborate felicity; but this idea was evidently first suggested, and afterwards religiously compared with nature. This was his excellence. His fault is that his style of execution is too mathematical; that is, his pencil does not follow the graceful variety of the details of objects, but substitutes certain refined gradations, both of form and colour, producing equal changes in equal distances, with a mechanical uniformity. Leonardo was a man of profound learning as well as genius, and perhaps transferred too much of the formality of science to his favourite art.

The masterpieces of Correggio have the same identity with nature, the same stamp of truth. He has indeed given to his pictures the utmost softness and refinement of outline and expression; but this idea, at which he constantly aimed, is filled up with all the details and varieties which such heads would have in nature. So far from any thing like a naked abstract idea, or middle form, the individuality of his faces has something peculiar in it, even approaching the grotesque. He has endeavoured to impress habitually on the countenance those

undulating outlines which rapture or tenderness leave there, and has chosen for this purpose those forms and proportions which most obviously assisted his design.

As to the colouring of Correggio, it is nature itself. Not only is the general tone perfectly true, but every speck and particle is varied in colour, in relief, in texture, with a care, a felicity, and an effect which is almost magical. His light and shade are equally admirable. No one else, perhaps, ever gave the same harmony and roundness to his compositions. So true are his shadows, equally free from coldness, opacity, or false glare;—so clear, so broken, so airy, and yet so deep, that if you hold your hand so as to cast a shadow on any part of the flesh which is in the light, this part, so shaded, will present exactly the same appearance which the painter has given to the shadowed part of the picture. Correggio indeed possessed a greater variety of excellences in the different departments of his art than any other painter; and yet it is remarkable that the impression which his pictures leave upon the mind of the common spectator is monotonous and comparatively feeble. His style is in some degree mannered and confined. For instance, he is without the force, passion, and grandeur of

Raphael, who, however, possessed his softness of expression, but of expression only; and in colour, in light and shade, and other qualities, was quite inferior to Correggio. We may, perhaps, solve this apparent contradiction by saying, that he applied the power of his mind to a greater variety of objects than others; but that this power was still of the same character, consisting in a certain exquisite sense of the harmonious, the soft and graceful in form, colour, and sentiment, but with a deficiency of strength, and a tendency to effeminacy in all these.

After the names of Raphael and Correggio, I shall mention that of Guido, whose female faces are exceedingly beautiful and' ideal, but altogether common-place and vapid compared with those of Raphael or Correggio; and they are so for no other reason but that the general idea they convey is not enriched and strengthened by an intense contemplation of nature. For the same reason, I can conceive nothing more unlike the antique than the figures of Poussin, except as to the preservation of the costume; and it is perhaps chiefly owing to the habit of studying his art at second-hand, or by means of scientific rules, that the great merits of that able painter, whose understanding and

genius are unquestionable, are confined to his choice of subjects for his pictures, and his manner of telling the story. His landscapes, which he probably took from nature, are superior as paintings to his historical pieces. The faces of Poussin want natural expression, as his figures want grace; but the back-grounds of his historical compositions can scarcely be surpassed. In his *Plague of Athens* the very buildings seem stiff with horror. His giants, seated on the top of their fabled mountains, and playing on their panpipes are as familiar and natural as if they were the ordinary inhabitants of the scene. The finest of his landscapes is his picture of the *Deluge*. The sun is just seen, wan and drooping in his course. The sky is bowed down with a weight of waters, and heaven and earth seem mingling together.

Titian is at the head of the Venetian school; he is the first of all colourists. In delicacy and purity Correggio is equal to him, but his colouring has not the same warmth and gusto in it. Titian's flesh-colour partakes of the glowing nature of the climate, and of the luxuriousness of the manners of his country. He represents objects not through a merely lucid medium, but as if tinged with a golden light. Yet it is wonderful in how low a tone of local

colouring his pictures are painted,—how rigidly his means are husbanded. His most gorgeous effects are produced, not less by keeping down than by heightening his colours; the fineness of his gradations adds to their variety and force; and, with him, truth is the same thing as splendour. Every thing is done by the severity of his eye, by the patience of his touch. He is enabled to keep pace with nature by never hurrying on before her; and as he forms the broadest masses out of innumerable varying parts and minute touches of the pencil, so he unites and harmonizes the strongest contrasts by the most imperceptible transitions. Every distinction is relieved and broken by some other intermediate distinction, like half-notes in music; and yet all this accumulation of endless variety is so managed as only to produce the majestic simplicity of nature, so that to a common eye there is nothing extraordinary in his pictures, any more than in nature itself. It is, I believe, owing to what has been here stated, that Titian is, of all painters, at once the easiest and the most difficult to copy. He is the most difficult to copy perfectly, for the artifice of his colouring and execution is hid in its apparent simplicity; and yet the knowledge of nature, and the arrangement of

the forms and masses in his pictures, are so masterly, that any copy made from them, even the rudest outline or sketch, can hardly fail to have a look of high art. Because he was the greatest colourist in the world, this, which was his most prominent, has, for shortness, been considered as his only excellence; and he has been said to have been ignorant of drawing. What he was, generally speaking, deficient in, was invention or composition, though even this appears to have been more from habit than want of power; but his drawing of actual forms, where they were not to be put into momentary action, or adapted to a particular expression, was as fine as possible. His drawing of the forms of inanimate objects is unrivalled. His trees have a marked character and physiognomy of their own, and exhibit an appearance of strength or flexibility, solidity or lightness, as if they were endued with conscious power and purposes. Character was another excellence which Titian possessed in the highest degree. It is scarcely speaking too highly of his portraits to say that they have as much expression, that is, convey as fine an idea of intellect and feeling as the historical heads of Raphael. The chief difference appears to be that the expression in Raphael is more imaginary and contemplative,

and in Titian more personal and constitutional. The heads of the one seem thinking more of some event or subject, those of the other to be thinking more of themselves. In the portraits of Titian, as might be expected, the Italian character always predominates: there is a look of piercing sagacity, of commanding intellect, of acute sensibility, which it would be in vain to seek for in any other portraits. The daring spirit and irritable passions of the age and country are distinctly stamped upon their countenances, and can be as little mistaken as the costume which they wear. The portraits of Raphael, though full of profound thought and feeling, have more of common humanity about them. Titian's portraits are the most historical that ever were painted; and they are so for this reason, that they have most consistency of form and expression. His portraits of *Hippolito de Medici* and of a *Young Neapolitan Nobleman*, lately in the gallery of the Louvre, are a striking contrast in this respect. All the lines of the face in the one, the eye-brows, the nose, the corners of the mouth, the contour of the face present the same sharp angles, the same acute, edgy, contracted, violent expression. The other portrait has the finest expansion of feature and outline, and conveys the most exquisite idea of mild

thoughtful sentiment. The consistency of the expression constitutes as great a charm in Titian's portraits as the harmony of the colouring. The similarity sometimes objected to his heads is partly national and partly arises from the class of persons whom he painted. He painted only Italians; and in his time it rarely happened that any but persons of the highest rank, senators or cardinals, sat for their pictures. The similarity of costume, of the dress, the beard, &c. also adds to the similarity of their appearance. It adds, at the same time, to their picturesque effect; and the alteration in this respect is one circumstance, among others, that has been injurious, not to say fatal to modern art. This observation is not confined to portrait; for the hired dresses with which our historical painters clothe their figures sit no more easily on the imagination of the artist than they do gracefully on the lay-figures over which they are thrown.

Giorgioni, Paul Veronese, Tintoret, and the Bassans are the remaining great names of the Venetian school. The excellence of all of these consisted in their bold, masterly, and striking imitation of nature. Their want of *ideal form* and elevated character is indeed a constant subject of reproach against them. Giorgioni

takes the first place among them ; for he was in some measure the master of Titian ; whereas the others were only his disciples. The Caraccis, Domenichino, and the rest of the Bolognese school formed themselves on a principle of combining the excellences of the Roman and Venetian painters, in which they for a while succeeded to a considerable degree ; but they degenerated and dwindled away into absolute insignificance in proportion as they departed from nature or the great masters who had copied her, to mould their works on academic rules and the phantoms of abstract perfection.

Rubens is the prince of the Flemish painters. Of all the great painters he is perhaps the most artificial : the man who painted most from his imagination, and, what was almost the inevitable consequence, the most of a mannerist. He had neither the Greek form to study from, nor the Roman expression, nor the high character, picturesque costume, and sun-burnt hues which the Venetian painters had immediately before them. He took, however, what circumstance presented to him, a fresher and more blooming tone of complexion, arising from moister air and a colder climate. To this he added the congenial splendour of reflected lights and shadows, cast from rich drapery ; and he

made what amends he could for the want of expression by the richness of his compositions and the fantastic variety of his allegorical groups. Both his colouring and his drawing were, however, ideal exaggerations; but both had particular qualities of the highest value. He has given to his flesh greater transparency and freshness than any other painter; and this excellence he had from nature. One of the finest instances will be found in his *Peasant Family going to Market*, in which the figures have all the bloom of health upon their countenances; and the very air of the surrounding landscape strikes sharp and wholesome on the sense. Rubens had another excellence: he has given all that relates to the expression of motion, in his allegorical figures, in his children, his animals, even in his trees, to a degree which no one else has equalled, or indeed approached. His drawing is often deficient in proportion, in knowledge, and in elegance, but it is always picturesque. The drawing of N. Poussin, on the contrary, which has been much cried up, is merely learned and anatomical: he has a knowledge of the structure and measurements of the human body, but very little feeling of the grand, or beautiful, or striking in form.

All Rubens' forms have ease, freedom, and

excessive elasticity. In the grotesque style of history, as in groups of satyrs, nymphs, bacchanals, and animals, where striking contrasts of form are combined with every kind of rapid and irregular movement, he has not a rival. Witness his *Silenus* at Blenheim, where the lines seem drunk and staggering; and his *Procession of Cupids riding on Animals* at Whitehall, with that adventurous leader of the infantine crew, who, with a spear is urging a lion, on which he is mounted, over the edge of the world; for beyond we only see a precipice of clouds and sky. Rubens' power of expressing motion, perhaps, arose from the facility of his pencil, and his habitually trusting a good deal to memory and imagination in his compositions; for this quality can be given in no other way. His portraits are the least valuable productions of his pencil. His landscapes are often delightful, and appear like the work of fairy hands.

It remains to speak of Vandyke and Rembrandt; the one the disciple of Rubens, the other the entire founder of his own school. It is not possible for two painters to be more opposite. The characteristic merits of the former are very happily summed up in a single line of a poetical critic, where he speaks of

“ The soft precision of the clear Vandyke.”

The general object of this analysis of the works of the great masters has been to show that their pre-eminence has constantly depended, not on the creation of a fantastic, abstract excellence, existing nowhere but in their own mind, but in their selecting and embodying some one view of nature, which came immediately under their habitual observation, and which their particular genius led them to study and imitate with success. This is certainly the case with Vandyke. His portraits, mostly of English women, in the collection in the Louvre, have a cool, refreshing air about them, a look of simplicity and modesty even in the very tone, which forms a fine contrast to the voluptuous glow and mellow golden lustre of Titian's Italian women. There is a quality of flesh-colour in Vandyke which is to be found in no other painter, and which exactly conveys the idea of the soft, smooth, sliding, continuous, delicately varied surface of the skin. The objects in his pictures have the least possible difference of light and shade, and are presented to the eye without passing through any indirect medium. It is this extreme purity and silvery clearness of tone, together with the facility and precision of his particular forms,

and a certain air of fashionable elegance, characteristic of the age in which he flourished, that places Vandyke in the first rank of portrait-painters.

If ever there was a man of genius in the art, it was Rembrandt. He might be said to have created a medium of his own, through which he saw all objects. He was the grossest and the least vulgar, that is to say, the least common-place in his grossness, of all men. He was the most downright, the least fastidious of the imitators of nature. He took any object, he cared not what, how mean soever in form, colour, and expression; and from the light and shade which he threw upon it, it came out gorgeous from his hands. As Vandyke made use of the smallest contrasts of light and shade, and painted as if in the open air, Rembrandt used the most violent and abrupt contrasts in this respect, and painted his objects as if in a dungeon. His pictures may be said to be "bright with excessive darkness." His vision had acquired a lynx-eyed sharpness from the artificial obscurity to which he had accustomed himself. "Mystery and silence hung upon his pencil." Yet he could pass rapidly from one extreme to another, and dip his colours with equal success in the gloom of night or in the

blaze of the noon-day sun. In surrounding different objects with a medium of imagination, solemn or dazzling, he was a true poet; in all the rest he was a mere painter, but a painter of no common stamp. The powers of his hand were equal to those of his eye; and, indeed, he could not have attempted the subjects he did, without an execution as masterly as his knowledge was profound. His colours are sometimes dropped in lumps on the canvass; at other times they are laid on as smooth as glass; and he not unfrequently painted with the handle of his brush. He had an eye for all objects as far as he had seen them. His history and landscapes are equally fine in their way. His landscapes one could look at for ever, though there is nothing in them. But "they are of the earth, earthy." It seems as if he had dug them out of nature. Everything is so true, so real, so full of all the feelings and associations which the eye can suggest to the other senses, that we immediately take as strong an affection to them as if they were our home—the very place where we were brought up. No length of time could add to the intensity of the impressions they convey. Rembrandt is the least classical and the most romantic of all painters. His *Jacob's Ladder* is more like a

dream than any other picture that ever was painted. The figure of Jacob himself is thrown in one corner of the picture like a bundle of clothes, while the angels hover above the darkness in the shape of airy wings.

It would be needless to prove that the generality of the Dutch painters copied from actual objects. They have become almost a bye-word for carrying this principle into its abuse, by copying everything they saw, and having no choice or preference of one thing to another, unless that they preferred that which was most obvious and common. I forgive them. They perhaps did better in faithfully and skilfully imitating what they had seen, than in imagining what they had not seen. Their pictures, at least, show that there is nothing in nature, however mean or trivial, that has not its beauty, and some interest belonging to it, if truly represented. I prefer Vangoyen's views on the borders of a canal, the yellow-tufted bank and passing sail, or Ruysdael's woods and sparkling waterfalls, to the most classical or epic compositions which could have been invented out of nothing; and I think that Teniers's boors, old women, and children, are very superior to the little carved ivory Venuses in the pictures of Vanderneer; just as I think Hogarth's *Mar-*

riage à la Mode is better than his *Sigismunda*, or as Mr Wilkie's *Card-Players* is better than his *Alfred*. I should not assuredly prefer a *Dutch Fair* by Teniers to a *Cartoon* by Raphael; but I suspect I should prefer a *Dutch Fair* by Teniers to a *Cartoon* by the same master; or, I should prefer truth and nature in the simplest dress, to affectation and inanity in the most pompous disguise. Whatever is genuine in art must proceed from the impulse of nature and individual genius.

In the French school there are but two names of high and established reputation—N. Poussin and Claude Lorraine. Of the former I have already spoken; of the latter I shall give my opinion when I come to speak of our own Wilson. I ought not to pass over the names of Murillo and Velasquez, those admirable Spanish painters. It is difficult to characterize their peculiar excellences as distinct from those of the Italian and Dutch schools. They may be said to hold a middle rank between the painters of mind and body. They express not so much thought and sentiment, nor yet the mere exterior, as the life and spirit of the man. Murillo is probably at the head of that class of painters who have treated subjects of common life. After making the colours on the canvass feel and

think, the next best thing is to make them breathe and live. But there is in Murillo's pictures of this kind a look of real life, a cordial flow of native animal spirits, which we find nowhere else. I might here refer particularly to his picture of the *Two Spanish Beggar Boys*, in the collection at Dulwich College, which cannot easily be forgotten by those who have ever seen it.

I come now to treat of the progress of art in Britain.

I shall first speak of Hogarth, both as he is the first name in the order of time that we have to boast of, and as he is the greatest comic painter of any age or country. His pictures are not imitations of still life, or mere transcripts of incidental scenes or customs; but powerful moral satires, exposing vice and folly in their most ludicrous points of view, and, with a profound insight into the weak sides of character and manners, in all their tendencies, combinations, and contrasts. There is not a single picture of his containing a representation of merely natural or domestic scenery. His object is not so much "to hold the mirror up to nature," as "to show vice her own feature, scorn her own image." Folly is there seen at the height—the moon is at the full—it is the

very error of the time. There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities, a tilt and tournament of absurdities, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy, extravagant, and ostentatious! Yet he is as little a caricaturist as he is a painter of still life. Criticism has not done him justice, though public opinion has. His works have received a sanction which it would be vain to dispute, in the universal delight and admiration with which they have been regarded, from their first appearance to the present moment. If the quantity of amusement, or of matter for reflection, which they have afforded, is that by which we are to judge of precedence among the intellectual benefactors of mankind, there are perhaps few persons who can put in a stronger claim to our gratitude than Hogarth. The wonderful knowledge which he possessed of human life and manners is only to be surpassed (if it can be) by the powers of invention with which he has arranged his materials, and by the mastery of execution with which he has embodied and made tangible the very thoughts and passing movements of the mind. Some persons object to the style of Hogarth's pictures, or to the class to which they belong. First, Hogarth belongs to no class, or, if he belongs to any, it is to the same class as Fielding, Smollett,

Vanbrugh, and Molière. Besides, the merit of his pictures does not depend on the nature of his subjects, but on the knowledge displayed of them, in the number of ideas, in the fund of observation and amusement contained in them. Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity of the subjects—yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character,—in the invention of incident, in wit and humour, in life and motion, in everlasting variety and originality,—they never have been, and probably never will be, surpassed. They stimulate the faculties as well as amuse them. “Other pictures we see, Hogarth’s we read !”*

There is one error which has been frequently entertained on this subject, and which I wish to correct, namely, that Hogarth’s genius was confined to the imitation of the coarse humours and broad farce of the lowest life. But he excelled quite as much in exhibiting the vices, the folly, and frivolity of the fashionable manners of his time. His fine ladies do not yield the palm of ridicule to his waiting-maids, and his lords and his porters are on a very respectable footing of equality. He is quite

* See an admirable ‘Essay on the Genius of Hogarth,’ by Charles Lamb.

at home either in St Giles's or St James's. There is no want, for example, in his *Marriage à la Mode*, or his *Taste in High Life*, of affectation verging into idiotcy, or of languid sensibility that might

“Die of a rose in aromatic pain.”

Many of Hogarth's characters would form admirable illustrations of Pope's 'Satires,' who was contemporary with him. In short, Hogarth was a painter of real, not of low life. He was, as we have said, a satirist, and consequently his pencil did not dwell on the grand and beautiful, but it glanced with equal success at the absurdities and peculiarities of high or low life, “of the great vulgar and the small.”

To this it must be added, that he was as great a master of passion as of humour. He succeeded in low tragedy as much as in low or genteel comedy, and had an absolute power in moving the affections and rending the hearts of the spectators, by depicting the effects of the most dreadful calamities of human life on common minds and common countenances. Of this the *Rake's Progress*, particularly the Bedlam Scene, and many others are unanswerable proofs. Hogarth's merits as a mere artist are not confined to his prints. In general, indeed, this is the case. But when he chose to take

pains, he could add the delicacies of execution and colouring in the highest degree to those of character and composition ; as is evident in his series of pictures, all equally well painted, of the *Marriage à la Mode*.

I shall next speak of Wilson, whose landscapes may be divided into three classes,—his Italian landscapes, or imitations of the manner of Claude,—his copies of English scenery,—and his historical compositions. The first of these are, in my opinion, by much the best ; and I appeal, in support of this opinion, to the *Apollo and the Seasons*, and to the *Phaeton*. The figures are of course out of the question (these being as uncouth and slovenly as Claude's are insipid and finical) ; but the landscape in both pictures is delightful. In looking at them we breathe the air which the scene inspires, and feel the genius of the place present to us. In the first, there is the cool freshness of a misty spring morning ; the sky, the water, the dim horizon, all convey the same feeling. The fine gray tone and varying outline of the hills ; the graceful form of the retiring lake, broken still more by the hazy shadows of the objects that repose on its bosom ; the light trees that expand their branches in the air, and the dark stone figure and mouldering temple, that contrast strongly with the

broad clear light of the rising day,—give a charm, a truth, a force, and harmony to this composition, which produce the greater pleasure the longer it is dwelt on. The distribution of light and shade resembles the effect of light on a globe. The *Phaeton* has the dazzling fervid appearance of an autumnal evening; the golden radiance streams in solid masses from behind the flickering clouds; every object is baked in the sun; the brown foreground, the thick foliage of the trees, the streams, shrunk and stealing along behind the dark high banks,—combine to produce that richness and characteristic unity of effect which is to be found only in nature, or in art derived from the study and imitation of nature. These two pictures, as they have the greatest general effect, are also more carefully finished than any other pictures I have seen of his.

In general, Wilson's views of English scenery want almost every thing that ought to recommend them. The subjects he has chosen are not well fitted for the landscape painter, and there is nothing in the execution to redeem them. Ill-shaped mountains, or great heaps of earth,—trees that grow against them without character or elegance,—motionless waterfalls,—a want of relief, of transparency and distance, without the impos-

ing grandeur of real magnitude (which it is scarcely within the province of art to give),—are the chief features and defects of this class of his pictures. In more confined scenes the effect must depend almost entirely in the differences in the execution and the details; for the difference of colour alone is not sufficient to give relief to objects placed at a small distance from the eye. But in Wilson there are commonly no details,—all is loose and general; and this very circumstance, which might assist him in giving the massy contrasts of light and shade, deprived his pencil of all force and precision within a limited space. In general, air is necessary to the landscape-painter; and, for this reason, the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland afford few subjects for landscape painting. However stupendous the scenery of that part of the country is, and however powerful and lasting the impression which it must always make on the imagination, yet the effect is not produced merely through the medium of the eye, but arises chiefly from collateral and associated feelings. There is the knowledge of the physical magnitude of the objects in the midst of which we are placed,—the slow, improgressive motion which we make in traversing them;—there is the abrupt precipice, the torrent's roar,

the boundless expanse of the prospect from the highest mountains, — the difficulty of their ascent, their loneliness and silence; in short, there is a constant sense and superstitious awe of the collective power of matter, on which, from the beginning of time, the hand of man has made no impression, and which, by the lofty reflexions they excite in us, give a sort of intellectual sublimity even to our sense of physical weakness. But there is little in all these circumstances that can be translated into the *picturesque*, which makes its appeal immediately to the eye.

Wilson's historical landscapes, his *Niobe*, *Ceddon and Amelia*, &c. &c. do not, in my estimation, display either taste or fine imagination, but are affected and violent exaggerations of clumsy common nature. They are made up mechanically of the same stock of materials, an overhanging rock, bare shattered trees, black rolling clouds, and forked lightning. The figures in the most celebrated of these are not, like the children of Niobe, punished by the gods, but like a group of rustics crouching from a hail storm. I agree with Sir Joshua Reynolds, that Wilson's mind was not, like N. Poussin's, sufficiently imbued with the knowledge of antiquity to transport the imagination

three thousand years back, to give natural objects a sympathy with preternatural events, and to inform rocks, and trees, and mountains with the presence of a God. To sum up this general character, I may observe, that besides his excellence in aerial perspective, Wilson had great truth, harmony, and depth of local colouring. He had a fine feeling of the proportions and conduct of light and shade, and also an eye for graceful form, as far as regards the bold and varying outlines of indefinite objects, as may be seen in his foregrounds, &c. where the artist is not tied down to an imitation of characteristic and articulate forms. In his figures, trees, cattle, and in every thing having a determinate and regular form, his pencil was not only deficient in accuracy of outline, but even in perspective and actual relief. His trees, in particular, seem pasted on the canvass, like botanical specimens. In fine, I cannot subscribe to the opinion of those who assert that Wilson was superior to Claude as a man of genius; nor can I discern any other grounds for this opinion than what would lead to the general conclusion, that the more slovenly the work the finer the picture, and that that which is imperfect is superior to that which is perfect. It might be said on the same principle, that

the coarsest sign-painting is better than the reflection of a landscape in a mirror. The objection that is sometimes made to the mere imitation of nature cannot be made to the landscapes of Claude, for in them the graces themselves have, with their own hands, assisted in selecting and disposing every object. Is the general effect in his pictures injured by the details? Is the truth inconsistent with the beauty of the imitation? Does the perpetual profusion of objects and scenery, all perfect in themselves, interfere with the simple grandeur and comprehensive magnificence of the whole? Does the precision with which a plant is marked in the foreground take away from the air-drawn distinctions of the blue glimmering horizon? Is there any want of that endless airy space, where the eye wanders at liberty under the open sky, explores distant objects, and returns back as from a delightful journey? There is no comparison between Claude and Wilson. Sir Joshua Reynolds used to say that there would be another Raphael before there would be another Claude. His landscapes have all that is exquisite and refined in art and nature. Every thing is moulded into grace and harmony; and, at the touch of his pencil, shepherds with their flocks, temples, and groves,

and winding glades and scattered hamlets, rise up in never-ending succession, under the azure sky and the resplendent sun, while

“ Universal Pan,
Knit with the graces, and the hours in dance,
Leads on the eternal spring.”

Michael Angelo has left, in one of his sonnets, a fine apostrophe to the earliest poet of Italy :

“ Fain would I, to be what our Dante was,
Forego the happiest fortunes of mankind.”

What landscape-painter does not feel this of Claude ?*

I have heard an anecdote connected with the reputation of Gainsborough's pictures, which rests on pretty good authority. Sir Joshua Reynolds, at one of the Academy dinners, speaking of Gainsborough, said to a friend, “ He is undoubtedly the best English landscape-painter.” “ No,” said Wilson, who overheard the conversation, “ he is not the best landscape-painter, but he is the best portrait-painter in England.” They were both wrong ; but the

* This painter's book of studies from nature, commonly called ‘ Liber Veritatis,’ disproves the truth of the general opinion, that his landscapes are mere artificial compositions, for the finished pictures are nearly fac-similes of the original sketches.

story is creditable to the versatility of Gainsborough's talents. Those of his portraits which we have seen are not in the first rank. They are, in a good measure, imitations of Vandyke, and have more an air of gentility than of nature. His landscapes are of two classes, or periods, his early and his later pictures. The former are minute imitations of nature, or of painters who imitated nature, such as Ruysdael, &c. some of which have great truth and clearness. His later pictures are flimsy caricatures of Rubens, who himself carried inattention to the details to the utmost limit that it would bear. Many of Gainsborough's later landscapes may be compared to bad water-colour drawings, washed in by mechanical movements of the hand, without any communication with the eye. The truth seems to be, that Gainsborough found there was something wanting in his early manner, that is, something beyond the literal imitations of the details of natural objects; and he appears to have concluded rather hastily, that the way to arrive at that something more, was to discard truth and nature altogether. His fame rests principally, at present, on his fancy pieces, cottage children, shepherd boys, &c. These have often great truth, great sweetness, and the subjects are generally chosen with great

felicity. We too often find, however, in his happiest efforts, a consciousness in the turn of the limbs, and a pensive languor in the expression, which is not taken from nature. I think the gloss of art is never so ill bestowed, as on such subjects, the essence of which is simplicity. It is, perhaps, the general fault of Gainsborough, that he presents us with an ideal common life, of which we have had a surfeit in poetry and romance. His subjects are softened and sentimentalized too much; it is not simple unaffected nature that we see, but nature sitting for her picture. Our artist, we suspect, led the way to that masquerade style which piques itself on giving the air of an Adonis to the driver of a hay-cart, and models the features of a milk-maid on the principles of the antique. His *Woodman's Head* is admirable. Nor can too much praise be given to his *Shepherd Boy in a Storm*, in which the unconscious simplicity of the boy's expression, looking up with his hands folded and with timid wonder;—the noisy chattering of a magpie perched above,—and the rustling of the coming storm in the branches of the trees,—produce a most delightful and romantic impression on the mind. Gainsborough was to be considered, perhaps, rather as a man of delicate taste, and of an elegant and feeling mind, than

as a man of genius; as a lover of the art rather than an artist. He devoted himself to it, with a view to amuse and soothe his mind, with the ease of a gentleman, not with the severity of a professional student. He wished to make his pictures, like himself, amiable; but a too constant desire to please almost unavoidably leads to affectation and effeminacy. He wanted that vigour of intellect which perceives the beauty of truth: and thought that painting was to be gained, like other mistresses, by flattery and smiles. It was an error which we are disposed to forgive in one, around whose memory, both as an artist and a man, many fond recollections, many vain regrets, must always linger.*

The authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds, both from his example and instructions, has had, and still continues to have a considerable influence on the state of art in this country. That influence has been on the whole, unquestionably beneficial in itself, as well as highly creditable to the rare talents and elegant mind of Sir Joshua; for it has raised the art of painting

* The idea of the necessity of improving upon nature, and giving what was called a flattering likeness, was universal in this country fifty years ago, so that Gainsborough is not to be so much blamed for tampering with his subjects.

from the lowest state of degradation,—of dry, meagre, lifeless inanity,—to something at least respectable, and bearing an affinity to the rough strength and bold spirit of the national character. Whether the same implicit deference to his authority, which has helped to advance the art thus far, may not, among other causes, limit and retard its future progress,—whether there are not certain original errors, both in his principles and practice, which, the farther they are proceeded in, the farther they will lead us from the truth,—whether there is not a systematic bias from the right line, by which alone we can arrive at the goal of the highest perfection, are questions well worth considering.

I shall begin with Sir Joshua's merits as an artist. There is one error which I wish to correct at setting out, because I think it important. There is not a greater or more unaccountable mistake than the supposition that Sir Joshua Reynolds owed his success or excellence in his profession to his having been the first who introduced into this country more general principles of the art, and who raised portrait to the dignity of history, from the low drudgery of copying the peculiarities, meannesses, and details of individual nature, which was all that had been attempted by his immediate predeces-

sors. This is so far from being true, that the very reverse is the fact. If Sir Joshua did not give these details and peculiarities so much as might be wished, those who went before him did not give them at all. Those pretended general principles of the art, which, it is said, "alone give value and dignity to it," had been pushed to their extremest absurdity before his time; and it was in getting rid of the mechanical systematic monotony and *middle forms*, by the help of which Lely, Kneller, Hudson, the French painters, and others, carried on their manufactories of history and face-painting, and in returning (as far as he did return) to the truth and force of individual nature, that the secret both of his fame and fortune lay. The pedantic servile race of artists whom Reynolds superseded, had carried the abstract principle of improving on nature to such a degree of refinement, that they left it out altogether, and confounded all the varieties and irregularities of form, feature, character, expression, or attitude, in the same artificial mould of fancied grace and fashionable insipidity. The portraits of Kneller, for example, seem all to have been turned in a machine; the eye-brows are arched as if by a compass, the mouth curled, and the chin dimpled; the head turned on one side, and

the hands placed in the same affected position. The portraits of this mannerist, therefore, are as like one another as the dresses which were then in fashion, and have the same "dignity and value" as the full bottomed wigs which graced their originals. The superiority of Reynolds consisted in his being varied and natural, instead of being artificial and uniform. The spirit, grace, or dignity which he added to his portraits, he borrowed from nature, and not from the ambiguous quackery of rules. His feeling of truth and nature was too strong to permit him to adopt the unmeaning style of Kneller and Hudson; but his logical acuteness was not such as to enable him to detect the verbal fallacies and speculative absurdities which he had learned from Richardson and Coypel; and, from some defects in his own practice, he was led to confound negligence with grandeur. But of this hereafter.

Sir Joshua Reynolds owed his great superiority over his contemporaries to incessant practice and habitual attention to nature, to quick organic sensibility, to considerable power of observation, and still greater taste in perceiving and availing himself of those excellences of others which lay within his own walk of art. I can by no means look upon Sir Joshua as having

a claim to the first rank of genius. He would hardly have been a great painter if other great painters had not lived before him. He would not have given a first impulse to the art; nor did he advance any part of it beyond the point where he found it. He did not present any new view of nature, nor is he to be placed in the same class with those who did. Even in colour, his pallet was spread for him by the old masters; and his eye imbibed its full perception of depth and harmony of tone from the Dutch and Venetian schools rather than from nature. His early pictures are poor and flimsy. He indeed learned to see the finer qualities of nature through the works of art, which he, perhaps, might never have discovered in nature itself. He became rich by the accumulation of borrowed wealth; and his genius was the offspring of taste. He combined and applied the materials of others to his own purpose with admirable success; he was an industrious compiler or skilful translator, not an original inventor, in art. The art would remain, in all its essential elements, just where it is if Sir Joshua had never lived. He has supplied the industry of future plagiarists with no new materials. But it has been well observed, that the value of every work of art, as well as the genius of the artist, depends not

more on the degree of excellence than on the degree of originality displayed in it. Sir Joshua, however, was perhaps the most original imitator that ever appeared in the world ; and the reason of this, in a great measure, was, that he was compelled to combine what he saw in art with what he saw in nature, which was constantly before him. The portrait-painter is, in this respect, much less liable than the historical painter to deviate into the extremes of manner and affectation ; for he cannot discard nature altogether under the excuse that *she only puts him out*. He must meet her face to face ; and if he is not incorrigible, he will see something there that cannot fail to be of service to him. Another circumstance which must have been favourable to Sir Joshua was, that though not the originator in *point of time*, he was the first Englishman who transplanted the higher excellences of his profession into his own country, and had the merit, if not of an inventor, of a reformer of the art. His mode of painting had the graces of novelty in the age and country in which he lived ; and he had, therefore, all the stimulus to exertion which arose from the enthusiastic applause of his contemporaries, and from a desire to expand and refine the taste of the public.

To an eye for colour and for effects of light and shade, Sir Joshua united a strong perception of individual character, a lively feeling of the quaint and grotesque in expression, and great mastery of execution. He had comparatively little knowledge of drawing, either as it regarded proportion or form. The beauty of some of his female faces and figures arises almost entirely from their softness and fleshiness. His pencil wanted firmness and precision. The expression, even of his best portraits, seldom implies either lofty or impassioned intellect or delicate sensibility. He also wanted grace, if grace requires simplicity. The mere negation of stiffness and formality is not grace; for looseness and distortion are not grace. His favourite attitudes are not easy and natural, but the affectation of ease and nature. They are violent deviations from a right line. Many of the figures in his fancy pieces are placed in postures in which they could not remain for an instant without extreme difficulty and awkwardness. I may instance the *Girl Drawing with a Pencil*, and some others. His portraits are his best pictures, and of these his portraits of men are the best; his pictures of children are the next in value. He had fine subjects for the former, from the masculine sense and originality of

character of many of the persons whom he painted; and he had also a great advantage, as far as practice went, in painting a number of persons of every rank and description. Some of the finest and most interesting are those of Dr Johnson, Goldsmith (which is, however, too much a mere sketch), Baretti, Dr Burney, John Hunter, and the inimitable portrait of Bishop Newton. The elegant simplicity of character, expression, and drawing, preserved throughout the last picture, even to the attitude and mode of handling, discover the true genius of a painter. I also remember to have seen a print of Thomas Warton, than which nothing could be more characteristic or more natural. These were all Reynolds' intimate acquaintance, and it could not be said of them that they were men of "no mark or likelihood." Their traits had probably sunk deep into the artist's mind; he painted them as pure studies from nature, copying the real image existing before him, with all its known characteristic peculiarities; and, with as much wisdom as good nature, sacrificing the graces on the altar of friendship. They are downright portraits and nothing more, and they are valuable in proportion. In his portraits of women, on the contrary, with very few exceptions, Sir Joshua appears to have consulted

either the vanity of his employers or his own fanciful theory. They have not the look of individual nature, nor have they, to compensate the want of this, either peculiar elegance of form, refinement of expression, delicacy of complexion, or gracefulness of manner. Vandyke's attitudes have been complained of as stiff and confined. Reynolds, to avoid this defect, has fallen into the contrary extreme of negligence and contortion. His female figures which aim at gentility are twisted into that serpentine line, the idea of which he ridiculed so much in Hogarth. Indeed, Sir Joshua in his 'Discourses,' (see his account of Correggio), speaks of grace as if it were nearly allied to affectation. Grace signifies that which is pleasing and natural in the posture and motions of the human form, as beauty is more properly applied to the form itself. That which is stiff, inanimate, and without motion, cannot therefore be graceful; but to suppose that a figure, to be graceful, need only be put into some languishing or extravagant posture, is to mistake flutter and affectation for ease and elegance.

Sir Joshua's children, as I have said above, are among his *chef-d'œuvres*. The faces of children have in general that want of precision of outline, that prominence of relief and strong

contrast of colour, which were peculiarly adapted to his style of painting. The arch simplicity of expression, and the grotesque character which he has given to the heads of his children, were, however, borrowed from Correggio. His *Puck* is the most masterly of all these; and the colouring, execution, and character, are alike exquisite. The single figure of the *Infant Hercules* is also admirable. Many of those to which his friends have suggested historical titles are mere common portraits or casual studies. Thus the *Infant Samuel* is an innocent little child saying its prayers at the bed's feet: it has nothing to do with the story of the Hebrew prophet. The same objection will apply to many of his fancy pieces and historical compositions. There is often no connexion between the picture and the subject but the name. Even his celebrated *Iphigenia*, beautiful as she is, and prodigal of her charms, does not answer to the idea of the story. In drawing the naked figure, Sir Joshua's want of truth and firmness of outline became more apparent; and his mode of laying on his colours, which in the face and extremities was relieved and broken by the abrupt inequalities of surface and variety of tints in each part, produce a degree of heaviness and opacity in the larger masses of

flesh colour, which can indeed only be avoided by extreme delicacy or extreme lightness of execution.

Shall I speak the truth at once? In my opinion, Sir Joshua did not possess either that high imagination, or those strong feelings, without which no painter can become a poet in his art. His larger historical compositions have been generally allowed to be most liable to objection in a critical point of view. I shall not attempt to judge them by scientific or technical rules, but make one or two observations on the character and feeling displayed in them. The highest subject which Sir Joshua has attempted was the *Count Ugolino*, and it was, as might be expected from the circumstances, a total failure. He had, it seems, painted a study of an old beggar-man's head; and some person, who must have known as little of painting as of poetry, persuaded the unsuspecting artist that it was the exact expression of Dante's *Count Ugolino*, one of the most grand, terrific, and appalling characters in modern fiction. Reynolds, who knew nothing of the matter but what he was told, took his good fortune for granted, and only extended his canvass to admit the rest of the figures. The attitude and expression of Count Ugolino himself are what the artist

intended them to be, till they were pampered into something else by the officious vanity of friends,—those of a common mendicant at the corner of a street, waiting patiently for some charitable donation. The imagination of the painter took refuge in a parish workhouse, instead of ascending the steps of the Tower of Famine. The hero of Dante is a lofty, high-minded, and unprincipled Italian nobleman, who had betrayed his country to the enemy, and who, as a punishment for his crime, is shut up with his four sons in the dungeon of the citadel, where he shortly finds the doors barred upon him, and food withheld. He in vain watches with eager feverish eye the opening of the door at the accustomed hour, and his looks turn to stone; his children one by one drop down dead at his feet; he is seized with blindness, and, in the agony of his despair, he gropes on his knees after them,

“ Calling each by name
For three days after they were dead.”

Even in the other world he is represented with the same fierce, dauntless, unrelenting character, “ gnawing the skull of his adversary, his fell repast.” The subject of the *Laocoon* is scarcely equal to that described by Dante.

The horror *there* is physical and momentary ; in the other, the imagination fills up the long, obscure, dreary void of despair, and joins its unutterable pangs to the loud cries of nature. What is there in the picture to convey the ghastly horrors of the scene, or the mighty energy of soul with which they are borne ? His picture of *Macbeth* is full of wild and grotesque images ; and the apparatus of the Witches contains a very elaborate and well arranged inventory of dreadful objects. His *Cardinal Beaufort* is a fine display of rich, mellow colouring ; and there is something gentlemanly and Shakespearian in the King and the Attendant Nobleman. At the same time, I think the expression of the Cardinal himself is too much one of physical horror, a canine gnashing of the teeth, like a man strangled. This is not the best style of history. Mrs Siddons as the *Tragic Muse* is neither the Tragic Muse nor Mrs Siddons ; and I have still stronger objections to *Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy*.

There is a striking similarity between Sir Joshua Reynolds' theory and his practice ; and as each of these has been appealed to in support of the other, it is necessary that I should examine both. Sir Joshua's practice was generally confined to the illustration of that part of his

theory which relates to the more immediate imitation of nature; and it is to what he says on this subject that I shall chiefly direct my observations at present.

He lays it down as a general and invariable rule, that "*the great style in art, and the most PERFECT IMITATION OF NATURE, consists in avoiding the details and peculiarities of particular objects.*" This sweeping principle he applies almost indiscriminately to *portrait, history, and landscape*; and he appears to have been led to the conclusion itself, from supposing the imitation of particulars to be inconsistent with general rule and effect. It appears to me that the highest perfection of the art depends, not on separating, but on uniting general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy.

First,—It is said that the great style in painting, as it relates to the immediate imitation of external nature, consists in avoiding the details of particular objects. It consists neither in giving nor avoiding them, but in something quite different from both. Any one may avoid the details. So far there is no difference between the *Cartoons* and a common sign painting. Greatness consists in giving the larger masses and proportions with truth;—this does

not prevent giving the smaller ones too. The utmost grandeur of outline, and the broadest masses of light and shade are perfectly compatible with the utmost minuteness and delicacy of detail, as may be seen in nature. It is not, indeed, common to see both qualities combined in the imitations of nature, any more than the combinations of other excellences; nor am I here saying to which the principal attention of the artist should be directed; but I deny that, considered in themselves, the absence of the one quality is necessary or sufficient to the production of the other.

If, for example, the form of the eye-brow is correctly given, it will be perfectly indifferent to the truth or grandeur of the design, whether it consists of one broad mark, or is composed of a number of hair-lines arranged in the same order. So, if the lights and shades are disposed in fine and large masses, the *breadth* of the picture, as it is called, cannot possibly be affected by the filling up of these masses with the details; that is, with the subordinate distinctions which appear in nature. The anatomical details in Michael Angelo, the ever-varying outline of Raphael, the perfect execution of the Greek statues, do not destroy their symmetry or dignity of form; and in the finest specimens

of the composition of colour we may observe the largest masses combined with the greatest variety in the parts of which these masses are composed.

The *gross* style consists in giving no detail, the *finical* in giving nothing else. Nature contains both large and small parts, both masses and details; and the same may be said of the most perfect works of art. The union of both kinds of excellence, of strength with delicacy, as far as the limits of human capacity and the shortness of human life would permit, is that which has established the reputation of the most successful imitators of nature. Farther, their most finished works are their best. The predominance, indeed, of either excellence in the best masters has varied according to their opinion of the relative value of these qualities,—the labour they had the time or the patience to bestow on their works,—the skill of the artist,—or the nature and extent of his subject. But if the rule here objected to, that the careful imitation of the parts injures the effect of the whole, be once admitted, slovenliness would become another name for genius, and the most unfinished performances be the best. That such has been the confused impression left on the mind by the perusal of Sir Joshua Reynolds' 'Discourses,' is

evident from the practice as well as conversation of many (even eminent) artists. The late Mr Opie proceeded entirely on this principle. He left many admirable studies of portraits, particularly in what relates to the disposition and effect of light and shade ; but he never finished any of the parts, thinking them beneath the attention of a great artist. He went over the whole head the second day as he had done the first, and therefore made no progress. The picture at last, having neither the lightness of a sketch, nor the accuracy of a finished work, looked coarse, laboured and heavy. Titian is the most perfect example of high finishing. In him the details are engrafted on the most profound knowledge of effect, and attention to the character of what he represented. His pictures have the exact look of nature, the very tone and texture of flesh. The variety of his tints is blended into the greatest simplicity. There is a proper degree both of solidity and transparency. All the parts hang together ; every stroke tells, and adds to the effect of the rest. Sir Joshua seems to deny that Titian finished much, and says that he produced by two or three strokes of his pencil, effects which the most laborious copyist would in vain attempt to equal. It is true, he availed himself in some

degree of what is called *execution*, to facilitate his imitation of the details and peculiarities of nature ; but it was to facilitate, not supersede. There can be nothing more distinct than execution and daubing. Titian, however, made a very moderate, though a very admirable, use of this power ; and those who copy his pictures will find that the simplicity is in the results, not in the details. To conclude my observations on this head, I will only add, that while the artist thinks there is any thing to be done, either to the whole or to the parts of his picture, which can give it still more the look of nature, if he is willing to proceed, I would not advise him to desist. This rule is the more necessary to the young student, for he will relax in his attention as he grows older. And, again, with respect to the subordinate parts of a picture, there is no danger that he will bestow a disproportionate degree of labour upon them, because he will not feel the same interest in copying them, and because a much less degree of accuracy will serve every purpose of deception.

Secondly,—With regard to the imitation of expression, I can hardly agree with Sir Joshua that “the perfection of portrait-painting consists in giving the general idea or character without the individual peculiarities.” No doubt,

if we were to choose between the general character and the peculiarities of feature, we ought to prefer the former. But they are so far from being incompatible with, that they are not without some difficulty distinguishable from, each other. There is a general look of the face, a predominant expression arising from the correspondence and connexion of the different parts, which it is of the first and last importance to give, and without which no elaboration of detached parts, or marking of the peculiarities of single features, is worth anything; but which at the same time is not destroyed, but assisted, by the careful finishing, and still more by giving the exact outline, of each part.

It is on this point that the modern French and English schools differ, and, in my opinion, are both wrong. The English seem generally to suppose, that if they only leave out the subordinate parts, they are sure of the general result. The French, on the contrary, as erroneously imagine that, by attending successively to each separate part, they must infallibly arrive at a correct whole: not considering that, besides the parts, there is their relation to each other, and the general impression stamped upon them by the character of the individual, which, to be seen, must be felt; for it is demonstrable, that

all character and expression, to be adequately represented, must be perceived by the mind, and not by the eye only. The French painters give only lines and precise differences, the English only general masses and strong effects. Hence the two nations reproach one another with the difference of their styles of art,—the one as dry, hard, and minute,—the other as gross, gothic, and unfinished; and they will probably remain for ever satisfied with each other's defects, as they afford a very tolerable fund of consolation on either side.

Much has been said of *historical portraits*, and I have no objection to this phrase, if properly understood. The giving historical truth to a portrait means, then, the representing the individual under one consistent, probable, and striking view; or showing the different features, muscles, &c. in one action, and modified by one principle. A portrait thus painted may be said to be *historical*; that is, it carries internal evidence of truth and propriety with it; and the number of individual peculiarities, as long as they are true to nature, cannot lessen, but must add to, the strength of the general impression.

It might be shown, if there were room in this place, that Sir Joshua has constructed his theory of the *ideal* in art upon the same mistaken prin-

ciple of the negation or abstraction of a *particular nature*. The *ideal* is not a negative, but a positive thing. The leaving out the details or peculiarities of an individual face does not make it one jot more ideal. To paint history is to paint nature as answering to a general, predominant, or pre-conceived idea in the mind, of strength, beauty, action, passion, thought, &c. ; but the way to do this is not to leave out the details, but to incorporate the general idea with the details ; that is, to show the same expression actuating and modifying every movement of the muscles, and the same character preserved consistently through every part of the body. Grandeur does not consist in omitting the parts, but in connecting all the parts into a whole, and in giving their combined and varied action ; abstract truth or ideal perfection does not consist in rejecting the peculiarities of form, but in rejecting all those which are not consistent with the character intended to be given, and in following up the same *general idea* of softness, voluptuousness, strength, activity, or any combination of these, through every ramification of the frame. But these modifications of form or expression can only be learnt from nature, and therefore the perfection of art must always be sought in nature. The ideal properly applies as much to

the *idea* of ugliness, weakness, folly, meanness, vice, as of beauty, strength, wisdom, magnanimity, or virtue. The antique heads of fauns and satyrs, of Pan or Silenus, are quite as ideal as those of the Apollo or Bacchus; and Hogarth adhered to an idea of humour in his faces, as Raphael did to an idea of sentiment. But Raphael found the character of sentiment in nature as much as Hogarth did that of humour, otherwise neither of them would have given one or the other with such perfect truth, purity, force, and keeping. Sir Joshua Reynolds' *ideal*, as consisting in a mere negation of individuality, bears just the same relation to real beauty or grandeur, as caricature does to true comic character.

It is owing either to a mistaken theory of elevated art, or to the want of models in nature, that the English are hitherto without any painter of serious historical subjects, who can be placed in the first rank of genius. Many of the pictures of modern artists have evidenced a capacity for correct and happy delineations of actual objects and domestic incidents only inferior to the masterpieces of the Dutch school. I might here mention the names of Wilkie, Collins, Heaphy, and others. We have portrait-painters who have attained to a very high degree of

excellence in all the branches of their art. In landscape, Turner has shown a knowledge of the effects of air, and of powerful relief in objects which was never surpassed. But in the highest walk of art—in giving the movements of the finer or loftier passions of the mind, this country has not produced a single painter who has made even a faint approach to the excellence of the great Italian painters. We have, indeed, a good number of specimens of the clay figure, the anatomical mechanism, the regular proportions measured by a two-foot rule;—large canvasses, covered with stiff figures, arranged in deliberate order, with the characters and story correctly expressed by uplifted eyes or hands, according to old receipt-books for the passions; with all the hardness and inflexibility of figures carved in wood, and painted over in good strong body colours, that look “as if some of nature’s journeymen had made them, and not made them well.” But we still want a Prometheus to give life to the cumbrous mass,—to throw an intellectual light over the opaque image,—to embody the inmost refinements of thought to the outward eye,—to lay bare the very soul of passion. That picture is of little comparative value, which can be completely *translated* into another lan-

guage,—of which the description in a common catalogue conveys all that is expressed by the picture itself; for it is the excellence of every art to give what can be given by no other in the same degree. Much less is that picture to be esteemed which only injures and defaces the idea already existing in the mind's eye: which does not come up to the conception which the imagination forms of the subject, and substitutes a dull reality for high sentiment; for the art is in this case an incumbrance, not an assistance, and interferes with, instead of adding to, the stock of our pleasurable sensations. But I should be at a loss to point out, I will not say any English picture, but certainly any English painter, who, in heroic and classical composition, has risen to the height of his subject, and answered the expectations of the well-informed spectator, or excited the same impression by visible means as had been excited by words or by reflection.* That this inferiority in English art is not owing to a deficiency of English genius, imagination, or passion, is proved sufficiently by the works of our poets and dramatic writers, which, in lofti-

* If I were to make any qualification of this censure, it would be in favour of some of Northcote's compositions from early English history.

ness and force, are not surpassed by those of any other nation. But whatever may be the depth of internal thought and feeling in the English character, it seems to be *more internal*; and, whether this is owing to habit or physical constitution, to have comparatively a less immediate and powerful communication with the organic expression of passion,—which exhibits the thoughts and feelings in the countenance, and furnishes matter for the historic muse of painting. The English artist is instantly sensible that the flutter, grimace, and extravagance of the French physiognomy, are incompatible with high history; and we are at no loss to explain in this way, that is, from the defect of living models, how it is that the productions of the French school are marked with all the affectation of national caricature, or sink into tame and lifeless imitations of the antique. May we not account satisfactorily for the general defects of our own historic productions in a similar way,—from a certain inertness and constitutional phlegm, which does not habitually impress the workings of the mind in correspondent traces on the countenance, and which may also render us less sensible of these outward and visible signs of passion, even when they are so impressed there? The irregularity of proportion

and want of symmetry in the structure of the national features, though it certainly enhances the difficulty of infusing natural grace and grandeur into the works of art, rather accounts for our not having been able to attain the exquisite refinements of Grecian sculpture, than for our not having rivalled the Italian painters in expression.

Mr West formed no exception to, but a confirmation of, these general observations. His pictures have all that can be required in what relates to the composition of the subject; to the regular arrangement of the groups; the anatomical proportions of the human body; and the technical knowledge of expression,—as far as expression is reducible to abstract rules, and is merely a vehicle for the telling of a story; so that anger, wonder, sorrow, pity, &c. have each their appropriate and well-known designations. These, however, are but the instrumental parts of the art, the means, not the end; but beyond these Mr West's pictures do not go. They never "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art." They exhibit the *mask*, not the *soul* of expression. I doubt whether, in the entire range of Mr West's productions, meritorious and admirable as the design and composition often are, there is to be found one truly fine head. They

display a total want of gusto. In Raphael, the same divine spirit breathes through every part ; it either agitates the inmost frame, or plays in gentle undulations on the trembling surface. Whether we see his figures bending with all the blandishments of maternal love, or standing in the motionless silence of thought, or hurried into the tumult of action, the whole is under the impulse of deep passion. But Mr West saw hardly any thing in the human face but bones and cartilages ; or if he availed himself of the more flexible machinery of nerves and muscles, it was only by rule and method. The effect is not that which the soul of passion impresses on the countenance, and which the soul of genius alone can seize ; but such as might, in a good measure, be given to wooden puppets or paste-board figures, pulled by wires, and taught to open the mouth, or knit the forehead, or raise the eyes in a very scientific manner. In fact, there is no want of art or limning in his pictures, but of nature and feeling.

It is not long since an opinion was very general, that all that was wanting to the highest splendour and perfection of the arts in this country might be supplied by academies and public institutions. There are *three* ways in which academies and public institutions may be

supposed to promote the fine arts; either by furnishing the best models to the student, or by holding out immediate emolument and patronage, or by improving the public taste. I shall bestow a short consideration on the influence of each.

First, a constant reference to the best models of art necessarily tends to enervate the mind, to intercept our view of nature, and to distract the attention by a variety of unattainable excellence. An intimate acquaintance with the works of the celebrated masters may indeed add to the indolent refinement of taste, but will never produce one work of original genius, one great artist. In proof of the general truth of this observation, I might cite the history of the progress and decay of art in all countries where it has flourished. It is a little extraordinary, that if the real sources of perfection are to be sought in schools, in models, and public institutions, that wherever schools, models, and public institutions have existed, there the arts should regularly disappear,—that the effect should never follow from the cause.

The Greek statues remain to this day unrivalled,—the undisputed standard of the most perfect symmetry of form. In Italy the art of painting has had the same fate. After its long

and painful struggles in the time of the earlier artists, Cimabue, Ghirlandajo, Massaccio, and others, it burst out with a light almost too dazzling to behold in the works of Titian, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Correggio; which was reflected with diminished lustre in the productions of their immediate disciples, lingered for a while with the school of the Carraccis, and expired with Guido Reni. From that period, painting sunk to so low a state in Italy as to excite only pity or contempt. There is not a single name to redeem its faded glory from utter oblivion. Yet this has not been owing to any want of Dilettanti and Della Cruscan Societies, of Academies of Florence, of Bologna, of Parma, and Pisa, of honorary members, and foreign correspondents,—of pupils and teachers, professors and patrons, and the whole busy tribe of critics and connoisseurs.

What is become of the successors of Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vandyke? What have the French academicians done for the art; or what will they ever do, but add intolerable affectation and grimace to centos of heads from the antique, and caricature Greek forms by putting them into opera attitudes? Nicholas Poussin is the only example on record in favour of the contrary theory, and I have already sufficiently

noticed his defects. What extraordinary advances have we made in our own country in consequence of the establishment of the Royal Academy? What greater names has the English school to boast than those of Hogarth, Reynolds, and Wilson, who created it?

Again, I might cite, in support of my assertion, the works of Carlo Maratti, of Raphael Mengs, or of any of the effeminate school of critics and copyists, who have attempted to blend the borrowed beauties of others in a perfect whole. What do they contain, but a negation of every excellence which they pretend to combine? The assiduous imitator, in his attempts to grasp all, loses his hold of that which was placed within his reach; and, from aspiring at universal excellence sinks into uniform mediocrity. The student who has models of every kind of excellence constantly before him, is not only diverted from that particular walk of art in which, by patient exertion, he might attain ultimate success, but, from having his imagination habitually raised to an overstrained standard of refinement, by the sight of the most exquisite examples in art, he becomes impatient and dissatisfied with his own attempts, determines to reach the same perfection all at once, or throws down his pencil in despair.

Thus the young enthusiast, whose genius and energy were to rival the great masters of antiquity, or create a new era in the art itself, baffled in his first sanguine expectations, reposes in indolence on what others have done,—wonders how such perfection could have been achieved,—grows familiar with the minutest peculiarities of the different schools,—flutters between the splendour of Rubens and the grace of Raphael, and ends in nothing. Such was not Correggio. He saw and felt for himself; he was of no school, but had his own world of art to create. That image of truth and beauty which existed in his mind he was forced to construct for himself, without rules or models. As it had arisen in his mind from the contemplation of nature, so he could only hope to embody it to others by the imitation of nature. We can conceive the work growing under his hand by slow and patient touches, approaching nearer to perfection, softened into finer grace, gaining strength from delicacy, and at last reflecting the pure image of nature on the canvass. Such is always the true progress of art; such are the necessary means by which the greatest works of every kind have been produced. They have been the effect of power gathering strength from exercise, and warmth

from its own impulse—stimulated to fresh efforts by conscious success, and by the surprize and strangeness of a new world of beauty opening to the delighted imagination. The triumphs of art were victories over the difficulties of art; the prodigies of genius, the result of that strength which had grappled with nature. Titian copied even a plant or a piece of common drapery from the objects themselves; and Raphael is known to have made elaborate studies of all the principal heads in his pictures. All the great painters of this period were thoroughly grounded in the first principles of their art; had learned to copy a face, a hand, or an eye, and had acquired patience to finish a single figure before they undertook to paint extensive compositions. They knew that though fame is represented with her head above the clouds, her feet rest upon the earth. Genius can only have its full scope where, though much may have been done, more remains to do; where models exist chiefly to show the differences of art, and where the perfect idea is left to be filled up in the painter's imagination. When once the stimulus of novelty and of original exertion is wanting, generations repose on what has been done for them by their predecessors, as individuals, after a certain period, rest satisfied

with the knowledge they have already acquired.

With regard to the pecuniary advantages arising from the public patronage of the arts, the plan unfortunately defeats itself; for it multiplies its objects faster than it can satisfy their claims, and raises up a swarm of competitors for the prize of genius from the dregs of idleness and dulness. The real patron is anxious to reward merit, not to encourage gratuitous pretensions to it; to see that the man of genius *takes no detriment*, that another Wilson is not left to perish for want; not to propagate the breed of embryo candidates for fame. Offers of public and promiscuous patronage can in general be little better than a species of intellectual seduction, administering provocatives to vanity and avarice, and leading astray the youth of the nation by hopes, which can scarcely ever be realized. At the same time, the good that might be done by private taste and benevolence is in a great measure defeated. The moment that a few individuals of discernment and liberal spirit become members of a public body, they are no longer anything more than parts of a machine, which is usually wielded at will by some officious, overweening pretender; their good sense and good nature are lost in a

mass of ignorance and presumption; their names only serve to reflect credit on proceedings in which they have no share, and which are determined upon by a majority of persons who have no interest in the arts, but what arises to them from the importance attached to them by regular organization, and no opinions but what are dictated to them by some self-constituted judge. As far as I have had an opportunity of observing the conduct of such bodies of men, instead of taking the lead of public opinion, of giving a firm, manly, and independent tone to that opinion, they make it their business to watch all its caprices, and follow it in every casual turning. They dare not give their sanction to sterling merit, struggling with difficulties, but take advantage of its success to reflect credit on their own reputation for sagacity. Their taste is a servile dependent on their vanity, and their patronage has an air of pauperism about it. Perhaps the only public patronage which was ever really useful to the arts, or worthy of them, was that which they received first in Greece, and afterwards in Italy, from the religious institutions of the country; when the artist felt himself, as it were, a servant at the altar; when his hand gave a visible form to gods or heroes, angels or

apostles; and when the enthusiasm of genius was exalted by mingling with the flame of national devotion. The artist was not here degraded by being made the dependent on the caprice of wealth or fashion, but felt at once the servant and the benefactor of the public. He had to embody, by the highest efforts of his art, subjects which were sacred to the imagination and feelings of the spectators; there was a common link, a mutual sympathy, between them in their common faith. Every other mode of patronage but that which arises either from the general institutions and manners of a people, or from the real, unaffected taste of individuals, must, I conceive, be illegitimate, corrupted in its source, and either ineffectual or injurious to its professed object.

Lastly, Academicians and institutions may be supposed to assist the progress of the fine arts, by promoting a wider taste for them.

In general, it must happen in the first stages of the arts, that as none but those who had a natural genius for them would attempt to practise them, so none but those who had a natural taste for them, would pretend to judge of or criticise them. This must be an incalculable advantage to the man of true genius; for it is no other than the privilege of being tried

by his peers. In an age when connoisseurship had not become a fashion,—when religion, war, and intrigue, occupied the time and thoughts of the great,—only those minds of superior refinement would be led to notice the works of art, who had a real sense of their excellence; and, in giving way to the powerful bent of his own genius, the painter was most likely to consult the taste of his judges. He had not to deal with pretenders to taste, through vanity, affectation, and idleness. He had to appeal to the higher faculties of the soul,—to that deep and innate sensibility to truth and beauty, which required only fit objects to have its enthusiasm excited,—and to that independent strength of mind, which, in the midst of ignorance and barbarism, hailed and fostered genius wherever it met with it. Titian was patronized by Charles the Fifth. Count Castiglione was the friend of Raphael. These were true patrons and true critics; and, as there were no others (for the world, in general, merely looked on and wondered), there can be little doubt that such a period of dearth of factitious patronage would be most favourable to the full development of the greatest talents, and to the attainment of the highest excellence.

By means of public institutions, the number

of candidates for fame and pretenders to criticism is increased beyond all calculation, while the quantity of genius and feeling remains much the same as before; with these disadvantages, that the man of original genius is often lost among the crowd of competitors, who would never have become such but from encouragement and example, and that the voice of the few whom nature intended for judges, is apt to be drowned in the noisy and forward suffrages of shallow smatterers in taste.

ESSAY XIII.

THE FIGHT.

VOL. II.

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ESSAY XIII.

THE FIGHT.

—“The *fight*, the *fight*’s the thing,
Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.”

X *Where there’s a will, there’s a way.*—I said so to myself, as I walked down Chancery lane, about half-past six o’clock on Monday the 10th of December, to inquire at Jack Randall’s where the fight the next day was to be; and I found “the proverb” nothing “musty” in the present instance. I was determined to see this fight, come what would, and see it I did, in great style. It was my *first fight*, yet it more than answered my expectations. Ladies! it is to you I dedicate this description; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and modesty are the old English virtues; and may they never look cold and askance on one another! Think, ye fairest of the fair, loveliest of the lovely kind, ye practisers of soft enchantment, how many more ye kill with poisoned baits than ever fell in the

ring; and listen with subdued air and without shuddering, to a tale tragic only in appearance, and sacred to the FANCY! ✕

x — I was going down Chancery lane, thinking to ask at Jack Randall's where the fight was to be, when looking through the glass-door of the *Hole in the Wall*, I heard a gentleman asking the same question at Mrs Randall, as the author of 'Waverley' would express it. (Now Mrs Randall stood answering the gentleman's question, with the authenticity of the lady of the Champion of the Light Weights.) Thinks I, I'll wait till this person comes out, and learn from him how it is. For to say a truth, I was not fond of going into this house of call for heroes and philosophers, ever since the owner of it (for Jack is no gentleman) threatened once upon a time to kick me out of doors for wanting a mutton-chop at his hospitable board, when the conqueror in thirteen battles was more full of *blue ruin* than of good manners. I was the more mortified at this repulse, inasmuch as I had heard Mr James Simpkins, hosier in the Strand, one day when the character of the *Hole in the Wall* was brought in question, observe—"The house is a very good house, and the company quite genteel: I have been there myself!" Remembering this unkind treatment of mine host, to which

mine hostess was also a party, and not wishing to put her in unquiet thoughts at a time jubilant like the present, I waited at the door, when, who should issue forth but my friend Joe Toms, and turning suddenly up Chancery lane with that quick jerk and impatient stride which distinguishes a lover of the FANCY, I said, "I'll be hanged if that fellow is not going to the fight, and is on his way to get me to go with him." So it proved in effect, and we agreed to adjourn to my lodgings to discuss measures with that cordiality which makes old friends like new, and new friends like old, on great occasions. We are cold to others only when we are dull in ourselves, and have neither thoughts nor feelings to impart to them. Give a man a topic in his head, a throb of pleasure in his heart, and he will be glad to share it with the first person he meets. Toms and I, though we seldom meet, were an *alter idem* on this memorable occasion, and had not an idea that we did not candidly impart; and "so carelessly did we fleet the time," that I wish no better, when there is another fight, than to have him for a companion on my journey down, and to return with my friend Jack Pigott, talking of what was to happen or of what did happen, with a noble subject always at hand, and liberty to digress to

others whenever they offered. Indeed, on my repeating the lines from Spenser in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm,

“What more felicity can fall to creature,
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?”

my last-named ingenious friend stopped me by saying that this, translated into the vulgate, meant “*Going to see a fight.*”

Joe Toms and I could not settle about the method of going down. x He said there was a caravan, he understood, to start from Tom Belcher's at two, which would go there *right out* and back again the next day. Now I never travel all night, and said I should get a cast to Newbury by one of the mails. Joe swore the thing was impossible, and I could only answer that I had made up my mind to it. In short, he seemed to me to waver, said he only came to see if I was going, had letters to write, a cause coming on the day after, and faintly said at parting (for I was bent on setting out that moment) —“Well, we meet at Philippi!” I made the best of my way to Piccadilly. y The mail coach stand was bare. “They are all gone,” said I—“this is always the way with me—in the instant I lose the future—if I had not stayed to pour out that last cup of tea, I should have been just in time;”—and cursing my folly and ill-luck

together, without inquiring at the coach-office whether the mails were gone or not, I walked on in despite, and to punish my own dilatoriness and want of determination. At any rate, I would not turn back: I might get to Hounslow, or perhaps farther, to be on my road the next morning. I passed Hyde park corner (my Rubicon), and trusted to fortune. Suddenly I heard the clattering of a Brentford stage, and the fight rushed full upon my fancy. I argued (not unwisely) that even a Brentford coachman was better company than my own thoughts (such as they were just then), and at his invitation mounted the box with him. I immediately stated my case to him—namely, my quarrel with myself for missing the Bath or Bristol mail, and my determination to get on in consequence as well as I could, without any disparagement or insulting comparison between longer or shorter stages. It is a maxim with me that stage-coaches, and consequently stage-coachmen, are respectable in proportion to the distance they have to travel: so I said nothing on that subject to my Brentford friend. Any incipient tendency to an abstract proposition, or (as he might have construed it) to a personal reflection of this kind, was however nipped in the bud; for I had no sooner declared indignantly



that I had missed the mails, than he flatly denied that they were gone along, and lo! at the instant three of them drove by in rapid, provoking, orderly succession, as if they would devour the ground before them. Here again I seemed in the contradictory situation of the man in Dryden who exclaims,

“I follow Fate, which does too hard pursue!”

If I had stopped to inquire at the White Horse Cellar, which would not have taken me a minute, I should now have been driving down the road in all the dignified unconcern and *ideal* perfection of mechanical conveyance. The Bath mail I had set my mind upon, and I had missed it, as I miss every thing else, by my own absurdity, in putting the will for the deed, and aiming at ends without employing means. “Sir,” said he of the Brentford, “the Bath mail will be up presently, my brother-in-law drives it, and I will engage to stop him if there is a place empty.” I almost doubted my good genius; but, sure enough, up it drove like lightning, and stopped directly at the call of the Brentford Jehu. I would not have believed this possible, but the brother-in-law of a mail-coach driver is himself no mean man. I was transferred without loss of time from the top of one coach to that of the other, desired the guard to

pay my fare to the Brentford coachman for me as I had no change, was accommodated with a great coat, put up my umbrella to keep off a drizzling mist, and we began to cut through the air like an arrow. The mile-stones disappeared one after another, the rain kept off; Tom Turtle,* the trainer, sat before me on the coach-box, with whom I exchanged civilities as a gentleman going to the fight; the passion that had transported me an hour before was subdued to pensive regret and conjectural musing on the next day's battle; I was promised a place inside at Reading, and upon the whole, I thought myself a lucky fellow. Such is the force of imagination! On the outside of any other coach on the 10th of December, with a Scotch mist drizzling through the cloudy moonlight air, I should have been cold, comfortless, impatient, and, no doubt, wet through; but seated on the Royal mail, I felt warm and comfortable, the air did me good, the ride did me good, I was pleased with the progress we had made, and confident that all would go well through the journey.

When I got inside at Reading, I found Turtle and a stout valetudinarian, whose costume bespoke him one of the FANCY, and who had risen from a three months' sick bed to get into

* John Thurtell, to wit.

the mail to see the fight. They were intimate, and we fell into a lively discourse. My friend the trainer was confined in his topics to fighting dogs and men, to bears and badgers; beyond this he was "quite chap-fallen," had not a word to throw at a dog, or indeed very wisely fell asleep, when any other game was started. The whole art of training (I, however, learnt from him,) consists in two things, exercise and abstinence, abstinence and exercise, repeated alternately and without end. A yolk of an egg with a spoonful of rum in it is the first thing in a morning, and then a walk of six miles till breakfast. This meal consists of a plentiful supply of tea and toast and beef-steaks. Then another six or seven miles till dinner-time, and another supply of solid beef or mutton with a pint of porter, and perhaps, at the utmost, a couple of glasses of sherry. Martin trains on water, but this increases his infirmity on another very dangerous side. The Gas-man takes now and then a chirping glass (under the rose) to console him, during a six weeks' probation, for the absence of Mrs Hickman — an agreeable woman, with (I understand) a pretty fortune of two hundred pounds. How matter presses on me! What stubborn things are facts! How inexhaustible is nature and art! "It is well,"

as I once heard Mr Richmond observe, "to see a variety." He was speaking of cock-fighting as an edifying spectacle. ✂ I cannot deny but that one learns more of what *is* (I do not say of what *ought to be*) in this desultory mode of practical study, than from reading the same book twice over, even though it should be a moral treatise. Where was I? I was sitting at dinner with the candidate for the honours of the ring, "where good digestion waits on appetite, and health on both." Then follows an hour of social chat and native glee; and afterwards, to another breathing over heathy hill or dale. Back to supper, and then to bed, and up by six again—Our hero

" Follows so the ever-running sun,
With profitable *ardour*—"

to the day that brings him victory or defeat in the green fairy circle. Is not this life more sweet than mine? I was going to say; but I will not libel any life by comparing it to mine, which is (at the date of these presents) bitter as *coloquintida* and the dregs of *aconitum*!

The invalid in the Bath mail soared a pitch above the trainer, and did not sleep so sound, because he had "more figures and more fantasies." We talked the hours away merrily. He had faith in surgery, for he had had three ribs set right, that had been broken in a *turn-*

up at Belcher's, but thought physicians old women, for they had no antidote in their catalogue for brandy. An indigestion is an excellent common-place for two people that never met before. By way of ingratiating myself, I told him the story of my doctor, who, on my earnestly representing to him that I thought his regimen had done me harm, assured me that the whole pharmacopeia contained nothing comparable to the prescription he had given me; and, as a proof of its undoubted efficacy, said, that "he had had one gentleman with my complaint under his hands for the last fifteen years." This anecdote made my companion shake the rough sides of his three great coats with boisterous laughter; and Turtle, starting out of his sleep, swore he knew how the fight would go, for he had had a dream about it. Sure enough the rascal told us how the three first rounds went off, but "his dream," like others, "denoted a foregone conclusion." He knew his men. The moon now rose in silver state, and I ventured, with some hesitation, to point out this object of placid beauty, with the blue serene beyond, to the man of science, to which his ear he "seriously inclined," the more as it gave promise *d'un beau jour* for the morrow, and showed the ring undrenched by envious showers, arrayed in sunny

smiles. Just then, all going on well; I thought on my friend Toms, whom I had left behind, and said innocently, "There was a blockhead of a fellow I left in town, who said there was no possibility of getting down by the mail, and talked of going by a caravan from Belcher's at two in the morning, after he had written some letters." "Why," said he of the lapells, "I should not wonder if that was the very person we saw running about like mad from one coach-door to another, and asking if any one had seen a friend of his, a gentleman going to the fight, whom he had missed stupidly enough by staying to write a note." "Pray, Sir," said my fellow-traveller, "had he a plaid-cloak on?"—"Why, no," said I, "not at the time I left him, but he very well might afterwards, for he offered to lend me one." The plaid-cloak and the letter decided the thing. Joe, sure enough, was in the Bristol mail, which preceded us by about fifty yards. This was droll enough. We had now but a few miles to our place of destination, and the first thing I did on alighting at Newbury, both coaches stopping at the same time, was to call out, "Pray, is there a gentleman in that mail of the name of Toms?" "No," said Joe, borrowing something of the vein of Gilpin, "for I have just got out." "Well!" says he,

“ this is lucky ; but you don't know how vexed I was to miss you ; for,” added he, lowering his voice, “ do you know when I left you I went to Belcher's to ask about the caravan, and Mrs Belcher said very obligingly, she couldn't tell about that, but there were two gentlemen who had taken places by the mail and were gone on in a laudau, and she could frank us. It's a pity I didn't meet with you ; we could then have got down for nothing. But *mum's the word.*” It's the devil for any one to tell me a secret, for it is sure to come out in print. I do not care so much to gratify a friend, but the public ear is too great a temptation to me.

X
Our present business was to get beds and a supper at an inn ; but this was no easy task. The public-houses were full, and where you saw a light at a private house, and people poking their heads out of the casement to see what was going on, they instantly put them in and shut the window, the moment you seemed advancing with a suspicious overture for accommodation. Our guard and coachman thundered away at the outer gate of the Crown for some time without effect—such was the greater noise within ;—and when the doors were unbarred, and we got admittance, we found a party assembled in the kitchen round a good

hospitable fire, some sleeping, others drinking, others talking on politics and on the fight. A tall English yeoman (something like Matthews in the face, and quite as great a wag)—

“ A lusty man to ben an abbot able,”—

was making such a prodigious noise about rent and taxes, and the price of corn now and formerly, that he had prevented us from being heard at the gate. The first thing I heard him say was to a shuffling fellow who wanted to be off a bet for a shilling glass of brandy and water—“ Confound it, man, don't be *insipid!*” Thinks I, that is a good phrase. It was a good omen. He kept it up so all night, nor flinched with the approach of morning. He was a fine fellow, with sense, wit, and spirit, a hearty body and a joyous mind, free-spoken, frank, convivial—one of that true English breed that went with Harry the Fifth to the siege of Harfleur—“standing like greyhounds in the slips,” &c. We ordered tea and eggs (beds were soon found to be out of the question) and this fellow's conversation was *sauce piquante*. It did one's heart good to see him brandish his oaken towel and to hear him talk. He made mince-meat of a drunken, stupid, red-faced, quarrelsome, *frowsy* farmer, whose nose “ he moralized into a thousand similes,” making it out a firebrand like

Bardolph's. "I'll tell you what my friend," says he, "the landlady has only to keep you here to save fire and candle. If one was to touch your nose, it would go off like a piece of charcoal." At this the other only grinned like an idiot, the sole variety in his purple face being his little peering grey eyes and yellow teeth; called for another glass, swore he would not stand it; and after many attempts to provoke his humorous antagonist to single combat, which the other turned off (after working him up to a ludicrous pitch of choler) with great adroitness, he fell quietly asleep with a glass of liquor in his hand, which he could not lift to his head. His laughing persecutor made a speech over him, and turning to the opposite side of the room, where they were all sleeping in the midst of this "loud and furious fun," said, "There's a scene, by G—d, for Hogarth to paint. I think he and Shakspeare were our two best men at copying life." This confirmed me in my good opinion of him. Hogarth, Shakspeare, and Nature, were just enough for him (indeed for any man) to know. I said, "You read Cobbett, don't you? At least," says I, "you talk just as well as he writes." He seemed to doubt this. But I said, "We have an hour to spare: if you'll get pen, ink, and paper, and keep on talking, I'll write

down what you say ; and if it doesn't make a capital ' Political Register,' I'll forfeit my head. You have kept me alive to-night, however. I don't know what I should have done without you." He did not dislike this view of the thing, nor my asking if he was not about the size of Jem Belcher ; and told me soon afterwards, in the confidence of friendship, that " the circumstance which had given him nearly the greatest concern in his life, was Cribb's beating Jem after he had lost his eye by racket playing." —The morning dawns ; that dim but yet clear light appears, which weighs like solid bars of metal on the sleepless eyelids ; the guests drop down from their chambers one by one—but it was too late to think of going to bed now (the clock was on the stroke of seven), we had nothing for it but to find a barber's (the pole that glittered in the morning sun lighted us to his shop), and then a nine miles' march to Hungerford. The day was fine, the sky was blue, the mists were retiring from the marshy ground, the path was tolerably dry, the sitting-up all night had not done us much harm—at least the cause was good ; we talked of this and that with amicable difference, roving and sipping of many subjects, but still invariably we returned to the fight. At length, a mile to the left of Hunger-

ford, on a gentle eminence, we saw the ring surrounded by covered carts, gigs, and carriages, of which hundreds had passed us on the road; Toms gave a youthful shout, and we hastened down a narrow lane to the scene of action.

X
Reader, have you ever seen a fight? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate. The crowd was very great when we arrived on the spot; open carriages were coming up, with streamers flying and music playing, and the country-people were pouring in over hedge and ditch in all directions, to see their hero beat or be beaten. The odds were still on Gas, but only about five to four. Gully had been down to try Neate, and had backed him considerably, which was a damper to the sanguine confidence of the adverse party. About two hundred thousand pounds were pending. The Gas says, he has lost 3000*l.* which were promised him by different gentlemen if he had won. He had presumed too much on himself, which had made others presume on him. This spirited and formidable young fellow seems to have taken for his motto the old maxim, that “there are three things necessary to success in life—*Impudence! Impudence! Impudence!*” It is so in matters of opinion, but not in the *Fancy*,

which is the most practical of all things, though even here confidence is half the battle, but only half. Our friend had vapoured and swaggered too much, as if he wanted to grin and bully his adversary out of the fight. "Alas! the Bristol man was not so tamed!"—"This is *the gravedigger*" (would Tom Hickman exclaim in the moments of intoxication from gin and success, shewing his tremendous right hand), "this will send many of them to their long homes; I haven't done with them yet!" Why should he—though he had licked four of the best men within the hour, yet why should he threaten to inflict dishonourable chastisement on my old master Richmond, a veteran going off the stage, and who has borne his sable honours meekly? Magnanimity, my dear Tom, and bravery, should be inseparable. Or why should he go up to his antagonist, the first time he ever saw him at the Fives Court, and measuring him from head to foot with a glance of contempt, as Achilles surveyed Hector, say to him, "What, are you Bill Neate? I'll knock more blood out of that great carcase of thine, this day fortnight, than you ever knock'd out of a bullock's!" It was not manly, 'twas not fighter-like. If he was sure of the victory (as he was not), the less said about it the better. Modesty should accompany

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the *Fancy* as its shadow. The best men were always the best behaved. Jem Belcher, the Game Chicken (before whom the Gas-man could not have lived) were civil, silent men. So is Cribb, so is Tom Belcher, the most elegant of sparrers, and not a man for every one to take by the nose. I enlarged on this topic in the mail (while Turtle was asleep), and said very wisely (as I thought) that impertinence was a part of no profession. A boxer was bound to beat his man, but not to thrust his fist, either actually or by implication, in every one's face. Even a highwayman, in the way of trade, may blow out your brains, but if he uses foul language at the same time, I should say he was no gentleman. A boxer, I would infer, need not be a blackguard or a coxcomb, more than another. Perhaps I press this point too much on a fallen man—Mr Thomas Hickman has by this time learnt that first of all lessons, "That man was made to mourn." He has lost nothing by the late fight but his presumption; and that every man may do as well without! By an over-display of this quality, however, the public had been prejudiced against him, and the *knowing-ones* were taken in. Few but those who had bet on him wished Gas to win. With my own prepossessions on the subject, the result of the 11th of December

appeared to me as fine a piece of poetical justice as I had ever witnessed. The difference of weight between the two combatants (14 stone to 12) was nothing to the sporting men. Great, heavy, clumsy, long-armed Bill Neate kicked the beam in the scale of the Gas-man's vanity. The amateurs were frightened at his big words, and thought they would make up for the difference of six feet and five feet nine. Truly, the *Fancy* are not men of imagination. They judge of what has been, and cannot conceive of any thing that is to be. The Gas-man had won hitherto; therefore he must beat a man half as big again as himself—and that to a certainty. Besides, there are as many feuds, factions, prejudices, pedantic notions in the *Fancy* as in the state or in the schools. Mr Gully is almost the only cool, sensible man among them, who exercises an unbiassed discretion, and is not a slave to his passions in these matters. But enough of reflections, and to our tale. The day, as I have said, was fine for a December morning. The grass was wet, and the ground miry, and ploughed up with multitudinous feet, except that, within the ring itself, there was a spot of virgin-green closed in and unprofaned by vulgar tread, that shone with dazzling brightness in the mid-day sun. For it

was now noon, and we had an hour to wait. This is the trying time. It is then the heart sickens, as you think what the two champions are about, and how short a time will determine their fate. After the first blow is struck, there is no opportunity for nervous apprehensions; you are swallowed up in the immediate interest of the scene—but

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

I found it so as I felt the sun's rays clinging to my back, and saw the white wintry clouds sink below the verge of the horizon. “ So, I thought, my fairest hopes have faded from my sight!—so will the Gas-man's glory, or that of his adversary, vanish in an hour.” The *swells* were parading in their white box-coats, the outer ring was cleared with some bruises on the heads and shins of the rustic assembly (for the *cockneys* had been distanced by the sixty-six miles); the time drew near; I had got a good stand; a bustle, a buzz, ran through the crowd; and from the opposite side entered Neate, between his second and bottle-holder. He rolled along, swathed in his loose great coat, his knock-knees bending under his huge bulk; and, with a modest cheerful air, threw his hat into the ring. He

then just looked round, and began quietly to undress; when from the other side there was a similar rush and an opening made, and the Gas-man came forward with a conscious air of anticipated triumph, too much like the cock-of-the-walk. He strutted about more than became a hero, sucked oranges with a supercilious air, and threw away the skin with a toss of his head, and went up and looked at Neate, which was an act of supererogation. The only sensible thing he did was, as he strode away from the modern Ajax, to fling out his arms, as if he wanted to try whether they would do their work that day. By this time they had stripped, and presented a strong contrast in appearance. If Neate was like Ajax, "with Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear" the pugilistic reputation of all Bristol, Hickman might be compared to Diomed, light, vigorous, elastic, and his back glistened in the sun, as he moved about, like a panther's hide. There was now a dead pause—attention was awe-struck. Who at that moment, big with a great event, did not draw his breath short—did not feel his heart throb? All was ready. They tossed up for the sun, and the Gas-man won. They were led up to the *scratch*—shook hands, and went at it.

In the first round every one thought it was

all over. After making play a short time, the Gas-man flew at his adversary like a tiger, struck five blows in as many seconds, three first, and then following him as he staggered back, two more, right and left, and down he fell, a mighty ruin. There was a shout, and I said, "There is no standing this." Neate seemed like a lifeless lump of flesh and bone, round which the Gas-man's blows played with the rapidity of electricity or lightning, and you imagined he would only be lifted up to be knocked down again. It was as if Hickman held a sword or a fire in that right hand of his, and directed it against an unarmed body. They met again, and Neate seemed, not cowed, but particularly cautious. I saw his teeth clenched together and his brows knit close against the sun. He held out both his arms at full length straight before him, like two sledge-hammers, and raised his left an inch or two higher. The Gas-man could not get over this guard—they struck mutually and fell, but without advantage on either side. It was the same in the next round; but the balance of power was thus restored—the fate of the battle was suspended. No one could tell how it would end. This was the only moment in which opinion was divided; for, in the next, the Gas-man aiming a mortal blow at his adver-

sary's neck, with his right hand, and failing from the length he had to reach, the other returned it with his left at full swing, planted a tremendous blow on his cheek-bone and eyebrow, and made a red ruin of that side of his face. The Gas-man went down, and there was another shout—a roar of triumph as the waves of fortune rolled tumultuously from side to side. This was a settler. Hickman got up, and “grinned horrible a ghastly smile,” yet he was evidently dashed in his opinion of himself; it was the first time he had ever been so punished; all one side of his face was perfect scarlet, and his right eye was closed in dingy blackness, as he advanced to the fight, less confident, but still determined. After one or two rounds, not receiving another such remembrancer, he rallied and went at it with his former impetuosity. But in vain. His strength had been weakened, — his blows could not tell at such a distance,—he was obliged to fling himself at his adversary, and could not strike from his feet; and almost as regularly as he flew at him with his right hand, Neate warded the blow, or drew back out of its reach, and felled him with the return of his left. / There was little cautious sparring —no half-hits—no tapping and trifling, none

of the *petit-maitreship* of the art—they were almost all knock-down blows:—the fight was a good stand-up fight. The wonder was the half-minute time. If there had been a minute or more allowed between each round, it would have been intelligible how they should by degrees recover strength and resolution; but to see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then, before you recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand ready to inflict or receive mortal offence, and rush upon each other “like two clouds over the Caspian”—this is the most astonishing thing of all:—this is the high and heroic state of man! From this time forward the event became more certain every round; and about the twelfth it seemed as if it must have been over. Hickman generally stood with his back to me; but in the scuffle, he had changed positions, and Neate just then made a tremendous lunge at him, and hit him full in the face. It was doubtful whether he would fall backwards or forwards; he hung suspended for a second or two, and then fell back, throwing his hands in the air, and with his face lifted up to the sky. I never saw any thing more terrific than his aspect

just before he fell. All traces of life, of natural expression, were gone from him. His face was like a human skull, a death's head, spouting blood. The eyes were filled with blood, the nose streamed with blood, the mouth gaped blood. He was not like an actual man, but like a preternatural, spectral appearance, or like one of the figures in Dante's *Inferno*. Yet he fought on after this for several rounds, still striking the first desperate blow, and Neate standing on the defensive, and using the same cautious guard to the last, as if he had still all his work to do; and it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his senses forsook him, and he could not come to time, that the battle was declared over. *S Ye who despise the Fancy, do something to shew as much *pluck*, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole

* Scroggins said of the Gas-man, that he thought he was a man of that courage, that if his hands were cut off, he would still fight on with the stumps — like that of Wil-drington,—

— “ In doleful dumps,
Who, when his legs were smitten off,
Still fought upon his stumps.”

course of your lives!—When the Gas-man came to himself, the first words he uttered were, “Where am I? What is the matter?” “Nothing is the matter, Tom,—you have lost the battle, but you are the bravest man alive.” And Jackson whispered to him, “I am collecting a purse for you, Tom.”—Vain sounds, and unheard at that moment! Neate instantly went up and shook him cordially by the hand, and seeing some old acquaintance, began to flourish with his fists, calling out, “Ah! you always said I couldn’t fight—What do you think now?” But all in good humour, and without any appearance of arrogance; only it was evident Bill Neate was pleased that he had won the fight. When it was over, I asked Cribb if he did not think it was a good one? He said, “*Pretty well!*” The carrier-pigeons now mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her husband’s victory to the bosom of Mrs Neate. Alas, for Mrs Hickman!

Mais au revoir, as Sir Fopling Flutter says. I went down with Toms; I returned with Jack Pigott, whom I met on the ground. Toms is a rattle-brain; Pigott is a sentimentalist. Now, under favour, I am a sentimentalist too—therefore I say nothing, but that the interest of

the excursion did not flag as I came back. Pigott and I marched along the causeway leading from Hungerford to Newbury, now observing the effect of a brilliant sun on the tawny meads or moss-coloured cottages, now exulting in the fight, now digressing to some topic of general and elegant literature. My friend was dressed in character for the occasion, or like one of the Fancy; that is, with a double portion of great coats; clogs, and overhauls: and just as we had agreed with a couple of country-lads to carry his superfluous wearing-apparel to the next town, we were overtaken by a return post-chaise, into which I got, Pigott preferring a seat on the bar. There were two strangers already in the chaise, and on their observing they supposed I had been to the fight, I said I had, and concluded they had done the same. They appeared, however, a little shy and sore on the subject; and it was not till after several hints dropped, and questions put, that it turned out that they had missed it. One of these friends had undertaken to drive the other there in his gig: they had set out, to make sure work, the day before at three in the afternoon. The owner of the one-horse vehicle scorned to ask his way, and drove right on to Bagshot, instead

of turning off at Hounslow: there they stopped all night, and set off the next day across the country to Reading, from whence they took coach, and got down within a mile or two of Hungerford, just half an hour after the fight was over. This might be safely set down as one of the miseries of human life. We parted with these two gentlemen who had been to see the fight, but had returned as they went, at Wolhampton, where we were promised beds (an irresistible temptation, for Pigott had passed the preceding night at Hungerford as we had done at Newbury), and we turned into an old bow-windowed parlour with a carpet and a snug fire; and after devouring a quantity of tea, toast, and eggs, sat down to consider, during an hour of philosophic leisure, what we should have for supper. In the midst of an Epicurean deliberation between a roasted fowl and mutton chops with mashed potatoes, we were interrupted by an inroad of Goths and Vandals—*O procul este profani*—not real flash-men, but interlopers, noisy pretenders, butchers from Tothill-fields, brokers from Whitechapel, who called immediately for pipes and tobacco, hoping it would not be disagreeable to the gentlemen, and began to insist that it was *a cross*. Pigott withdrew from the smoke and noise

into another room, and left me to dispute the point with them for a couple of hours *sans intermission* by the dial. The next morning we rose refreshed; and on observing that Jack had a pocket volume in his hand, in which he read in the intervals of our discourse, I inquired what it was, and learned to my particular satisfaction that it was a volume of the 'New Eloise.' Ladies, after this, will you contend that a love for the Fancy is incompatible with the cultivation of sentiment?—We jogged on as before, my friend setting me up in a genteel drab great coat and green silk handkerchief (which I must say became me exceedingly), and after stretching our legs for a few miles, and seeing Jack Randall, Ned Turner, and Scroggins, pass on the top of one of the Bath coaches, we engaged with the driver of the second to take us to London for the usual fee. I got inside, and found three other passengers. One of them was an old gentleman with an aquiline nose, powdered hair, and a pigtail, and who looked as if he had played many a rubber at the Bath rooms. I said to myself, he is very like Mr Windham; I wish he would enter into conversation, that I might hear what fine observations would come from those finely-turned features. However, nothing

passed, till, stopping to dine at Reading, some inquiry was made by the company about the fight, and I gave (as the reader may believe) an eloquent and animated description of it. When we got into the coach again, the old gentleman, after a graceful exordium, said, he had, when a boy, been to a fight between the famous Broughton and George Stevenson, who was called the *Fighting Coachman*, in the year 1770, with the late Mr Windham. This beginning flattered the spirit of prophecy within me, and rivetted my attention. He went on—"George Stevenson was coachman to a friend of my father's. He was an old man when I saw him some years afterwards. He took hold of his own arm and said, 'there was muscle here once, but now it is no more than this young gentleman's.' He added, 'well, no matter; I have been here long, I am willing to go hence, and I hope I have done no more harm than another man.' Once," said my unknown companion, "I asked him if he had ever beat Broughton? He said Yes; that he had fought with him three times, and the last time he fairly beat him, though the world did not allow it. 'I'll tell you how it was, master. When the seconds lifted us up in the last round, we were so exhausted that neither of us could

stand, and we fell upon one another, and as Master Broughton fell uppermost, the mob gave it in his favour, and he was said to have won the battle. But the fact was, that as his second (John Cuthbert) lifted him up, he said to him, "I'll fight no more, I've had enough;" which, says Stevenson, 'you know gave me the victory. And to prove to you that this was the case, when John Cuthbert was on his death-bed, and they asked him if there was any thing on his mind which he wished to confess, he answered, "Yes, that there was one thing he wished to set right, for that certainly Master Stevenson won that last fight with Master Broughton; for he whispered him as he lifted him up in the last round of all, that he had had enough."'" "This," said the Bath gentleman, "was a bit of human nature;" and I have written this account of the fight on purpose that it might not be lost to the world. He also stated as a proof of the candour of mind in this class of men, that Stevenson acknowledged that Broughton could have beat him in his best day; but that he (Broughton) was getting old in their last rencounter. When we stopped in Piccadilly, I wanted to ask the gentleman some questions about the late Mr

Windham, but had not courage. I got out, resigned my coat and green silk handkerchief to Pigott (loth to part with these ornaments of life), and walked home in high spirits.

P.S. Toms called upon me the next day, to ask me if I did not think the fight was a complete thing? I said I thought it was. I hope he will relish my account of it.

ESSAY XIV.

ON THE WANT OF MONEY.

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ON THE WANT OF MONEY.

It is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—for where there is a downright absence of the common necessaries of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labour, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea or shilling and the next that we may have the

good luck to encounter. This gap, this unwelcome interval constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this Essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort for which one's half-strung nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, ex-

presses it, "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," to learn, the first thing after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and buttermen have refused to give any farther credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage. It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source,—the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent; in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help. What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-crown which had slipped through a hole in the lining of your waistcoat, a crumpled bank-note in your breeches-pocket, or a guinea clinking in the bottom of your trunk, which had been thoughtlessly left there out of a former heap! Vain hope! Unfounded illusion! The experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a

pocket, not a drawer has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources, which form a legal tender in the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account? Is there not an old family-watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket that one could part with? nothing belonging to one's-self or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up? At this moment an old-clothes man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like a premeditated insult on one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glances furtively at an old hat or a great coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations! Miserable uncertainty! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do any thing!—The late Mr Sheridan was often reduced to this un-

pleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighbourhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the providing for the dinner; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot: the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of 'The School for Scandal,' to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day.*

* Taylor, of the Opera House, used to say of Sheridan, that he could not pull off his hat to him in the street without its costing him fifty pounds; and if he stopped to speak to him, it was a hundred. No one could be a stronger instance than he was of what is called *living from hand to mouth*. He was always in want of money, though he received vast sums which he must have disbursed; and yet nobody can tell what became of them, for he paid nobody. He spent his wife's fortune (sixteen hundred pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath, and returned to town as poor as a rat. Whenever he

The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can

and his son were invited out into the country, they always went in two post chaises and four; he in one, and his son Tom following in another. This is the secret of those who live in a round of extravagance, and are at the same time always in debt and difficulty—they throw away all the ready money they get upon any new-fangled whim or project that comes in their way, and never think of paying off old scores, which of course accumulate to a dreadful amount. “Such gain the cap of him who makes them fine, yet keeps his book uncrossed.” Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs Sheridan a very handsome dress down into the country, and went to Barber and Nunn’s to order it, saying he must have it by such a day, but promising they should have ready money. Mrs Barber (I think it was) made answer that the time was short, but that ready money was a very charming thing, and that he should have it. Accordingly, at the time appointed she brought the dress, which came to five-and-twenty pounds, and it was sent in to Mr Sheridan, who sent out a Mr Grimm (one of his jackalls) to say he admired it exceedingly, and that he was sure Mrs Sheridan would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound bank-note in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident, and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for farther instructions; who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs B. said she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room, at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently

bear up against this calamity better than the former, which really "blights the tender blos-

after, Sheridan came out in high good humour, and paid her the amount of her bill, in ten, five, and one pound notes. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment, which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, "I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do with it, my friend," said Sheridan, "take it home, and write it upon parchment!" He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was showing off near a coffee-house at the bottom of St James's street, rode it to Tattersall's, and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him; and, in a quarter of an hour afterwards they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr Sheridan was not yet up, and shown into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted, he asked, "Are those doors all shut, John?" and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old city friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favourite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again: but when they came to the door, they were told

som and promise of the day." With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger and

by the check-takers there was none for them, for that Mr Sheridan had been in the mean time, and had carried off all the money in the till. He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take their dinner together. On the night that Drury Lane was burnt down, Sheridan was in the House of Commons, making a speech, though he could hardly stand without leaning his hands on the table, and it was with some difficulty he was forced away, urging the plea, "What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the state?" When he got to Covent Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-house, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire. Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss. He declined this praise, and said—"Gentlemen, there are but three things in human life that in my opinion ought to disturb a wise man's patience. The first of these is bodily pain, and that (whatever the ancient stoics may have said to the contrary) is too much for any man to bear without flinching: this I have felt severely, and I know it to be the case. The second is the loss of a friend whom you have dearly loved; that, gentlemen, is a great evil: this I have also felt, and I know it to be too much for any man's fortitude. And the third is the consciousness of having done an unjust action. That, gentlemen, is a great evil, a very great evil, too much for any man to endure the reflection of; but that" (laying his hand upon his heart,) "but that, thank God, I have never felt!" I have been told that these were

moralize upon temperance. One has time to turn one's-self and look about one—to “screw one's courage to the sticking-place,” to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weather-cock world is every thing. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient. You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison or a brace of pheasants from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

“As kind as kings upon their coronation-day;”

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no

nearly the very words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very emphatically three or four times over, by an excellent authority, Mr Mathews the player, who was on the spot at the time,—a gentleman whom the public admire deservedly, but with whose real talents and nice discrimination of character his friends only are acquainted. Sheridan's reply to the watchman who had picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was, “I am Mr Wilberforce!”—is well known, and shews that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.* Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need. How many expedients are there in this great city, time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for tenpence, with the knives and folks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such a precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton-chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on your side, having deceived the gossips, and can submit to the want of a sumptuous repast without murmuring,

* In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whiskey with which you commence the day, is emphatically called “taking your *morning*.”

having saved your pride, and made a virtue of necessity. I say all this may be done by a man without a family (for what business has a man without money with one?—See *English Malthus and Scotch Macculloch*—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a Manchester manufacturer, who died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, “of formal cut,” to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of ‘*Gil Blas*,’ containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII, over an oyster-pâté, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury*, better than I did at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear

nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with the author) in the contrivance of old Caleb, in 'The Bride of Lammermuir,' for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they had in the house, and on her return home from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton:—

" And ever against *eating* cares,
Wrap me in soft Lydian airs!"

Defoe, in his 'Life of Colonel Jack,' gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a three-penny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking

soup, and the airs with which he called about him—"and every time," he says, "we called for bread, or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, 'coming, gentlemen, coming;' and this delighted me more than all the rest!" It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, "the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt!" Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel, about wealth and finery from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labour, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond's admiration of the old man at the banking-house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold as if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager anxious visits, day by day, to the hoard he had deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke's address to his riches, in the 'City Madam,' and in the extraordinary raptures of the 'Spanish Rogue' in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight: to which Mr Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets on this subject, which to our present more refined and

tamer apprehensions sound like blasphemy.* In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was truly worshipped as a god!

It is among the miseries of the want of money, not to be able to pay your reckoning at an inn—or, if you have just enough to do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a hackney-coach in a shower of rain—(when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken out of your pocket by a friend, who comes into your house eating peaches in a hot summer's-day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery-ticket, by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties;—or to find a letter lying for you at a country post-office, and not to have money in your pocket to free it, and be obliged

* Shylock's lamentation over the loss of "his daughter and his ducats," is another case in point.

to return for it the next day. The letter so unseasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which in some measure indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;— or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalization is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gentlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre*, which hinders them from acting; as authors are prevented from finishing a work, for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance, in the progress of it. There is a set of poor devils, who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual

benefit at one of the theatres ; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these ; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure ; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel beggars, who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors and retired old-maids pretend they can distinguish the knock of one of these at their door. I scarce know which I dislike the most—the patronage that affects to bring premature genius into notice, or that extends its piecemeal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds, and Funds for Decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class. If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled “by their so potent art” to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become imaginary, sit light

upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock-dinner or a real one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the same. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shows the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day; their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragements; and want and infirmities press upon them at once. “We know what we are,” as Ophelia says, “but we know not what we shall be.” A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—“within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us.” I heard not long ago of a poor man, who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to

his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonizing threads will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, “MY DEAR MISS NANCY!”

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet, and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully, yet the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-repeated demand, and to be without the means

to satisfy it ; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you ; to forfeit your credit ; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity ; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool ; and to have no way left to escape contempt but by incurring pity. The suddenly meeting a creditor on turning the corner of a street, whom you have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard run, as to be induced to request a repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honour and legal demands ; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands of money-lenders—to whom an application, if successful, is accompanied with a sense of being in the vulture's gripe—a reflection akin to that of those who formerly sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cool contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If any thing can be added to

the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you have a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and helpless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's 'Rake's Progress,' where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the Manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it:—"Your play has been read, and won't do."* To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off, and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. We have heard it remarked, that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and

* It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favours.

she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, "Ah! he was a fine fellow once!"

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty has no greater inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shews us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendour that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondriacal, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and would pick a quarrel with you). I can only

account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the background or play an under part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination. People endure existence even in Paris: the rows of chairs on the Boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons are brilliant; at the theatre there is Mademoiselle Mars—what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Bonaparte was yet beaten, “with wine of attic taste,” when wit, beauty, friendship presided at

the board! But no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a *Milord Anglais*. The want of money loses us friends not worth the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquets; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a race-ball, or to give their servants new liveries. I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live*, I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library; and the Duchess of — has immortalized herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that “if it afforded him

any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the 'Elegy in a Country Church-yard.'"

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of it, is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion consulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinized by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in one's own country; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment; it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to marry your landlady, or not the person you would wish; or to go out to the East or West-Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver-complaint; or to be a law-stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read

law and sit in court without a brief; or to be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal-engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts; with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years, and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the back-ground—or a gaol, by the fickleness of taste and some new favourite; to be full of enthusiasm and extravagance in youth, of chagrin and disappointment in after-life; to be jostled by the rabble because you do not ride in your coach, or avoided by those who know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse; to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do any thing for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds; to have cold comfort at home; to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess; to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wisecres*

will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes !

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the professions of the church or army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman ; a clergyman is something more. Echard's book ' On the Contempt of the Clergy ' is unfounded. It is surely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above actual want, that their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroic aspect. What are the begging friars ? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes ? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are other admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, and the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of superiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is

neither worth a doit nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbially poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French emigrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; both they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt subjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily incurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and good-humour of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them walking out in the summer's-evenings at Somers' Town, in their long great coats, their beards covered with snuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the rays of the setting sun, and regarded them with pity bordering on respect, as the last filmy vestige of the *ancien regime*, as shadows of loyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to disappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the bleeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted triumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation

devoutly to be wished. There is all the subdued splendour of external rank, the pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness. Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—"pure in the last recesses of the mind"—unmixed with, or unalloyed by "baser matter!"—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalizes all situations, and by which the absence of any thing only gives us a more intense and intimate perception of the reality; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward to ease with delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavoury morsel that is to save it from perishing; that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls; in short, that "we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus"—but this

hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined — those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people's. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having any thing to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home: and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them. With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a single bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage; whereas with a little management and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of com-

pany and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep any thing you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must*: if you let them have any thing to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You express surprise at their having run so largely in debt; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend? And how is this to be helped, when the manner of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him; and since he will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect

for his character you will not do. These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubble bursts at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich. It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable loan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highway-man of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connexion with the subject of this Essay—those who are always in want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it. Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want, in the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them, are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars, scarcely allow themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat,

are in dread of coming to the parish all their lives, and are not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram :

“ Here lies Father Clarges,
Who died to save charges ! ”

ESSAY XV.

**ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN
YOUTH.**

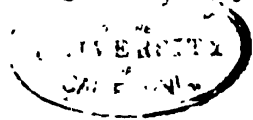
ESSAY XV.

ON THE FEELING OF IMMORTALITY IN YOUTH.

No young man believes he shall ever die. It was a saying of my brother's, and a fine one. There is a feeling of Eternity in youth which makes us amends for every thing. To be young is to be as one of the Immortals. One half of time indeed is spent—the other half remains in store for us with all its countless treasures, for there is no line drawn, and we see no limit to our hopes and wishes. We make the coming age our own—

“The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us.”

Death, old age, are words without a meaning, a dream, a fiction, with which we have nothing to do. Others may have undergone, or may



still undergo them—we “bear a charmed life,” which laughs to scorn all such idle fancies. As, in setting out on a delightful journey, we strain our eager sight forward,

“Bidding the lovely scenes at distance hail,”

and see no end to prospect after prospect, new objects presenting themselves as we advance, so in the outset of life we see no end to our desires nor to the opportunities of gratifying them. We have as yet found no obstacle, no disposition to flag, and it seems that we can go on so for ever. We look round in a new world, full of life and motion, and ceaseless progress, and feel in ourselves all the vigour and spirit to keep pace with it, and do not foresee from any present signs how we shall be left behind in the race, decline into old age, and drop into the grave. It is the simplicity and, as it were, abstractedness of our feelings in youth that (so to speak) identifies us with nature and (our experience being weak and our passions strong) makes us fancy ourselves immortal like it. Our short-lived connexion with being, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union. As infants smile and sleep, we are rocked in the cradle of our desires, and hushed into fancied security by the

roar of the universe around us—we quaff the cup of life with eager thirst without draining it, and joy and hope seem ever mantling to the brim—objects press around us, filling the mind with their magnitude and with the throng of desires that wait upon them, so that there is no room for the thoughts of death. We are too much dazzled by the gorgeousness and novelty of the bright waking dream about us to discern the dim shadow lingering for us in the distance. Nor would the hold that life has taken of us permit us to detach our thoughts that way even if we could. We are too much absorbed in present objects and pursuits. While the spirit of youth remains unimpaired, ere “the wine of life is drunk,” we are like people intoxicated or in a fever, who are hurried away by the violence of their own sensations: it is only as present objects begin to pall upon the sense, as we have been disappointed in our favourite pursuits, cut off from our closest ties, that we by degrees become weaned from the world, that passion loosens its hold upon futurity, and that we begin to contemplate as in a glass darkly the possibility of parting with it for good. Till then, the example of others has no effect upon us. Casualties we avoid; the slow approaches of age we play at *hide and*

Youth
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 find
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 need
 ...

seek with. Like the foolish fat scullion in Sterne who hears that Master Bobby is dead, our only reflection is, "So am not I!" The idea of death, instead of staggering our confidence, only seems to strengthen and enhance our sense of the possession and our enjoyment of life. Others may fall around us like leaves, or be mowed down by the scythe of Time like grass: these are but metaphors to the unreflecting buoyant ears and overweening presumption of youth. It is not till we see the flowers of Love, Hope, and Joy withering around us, that we give up the flattering delusions that before led us on, and that the emptiness and dreariness of the prospect before us reconciles us hypothetically to the silence of the grave.

Life is indeed a strange gift, and its privileges are most mysterious. No wonder when it is first granted to us, that our gratitude, our admiration, and our delight, should prevent us from reflecting on our own nothingness, or from thinking it will ever be recalled. Our first and strongest impressions are borrowed from the mighty scene that is opened to us, and we unconsciously transfer its durability as well as its splendour to ourselves. So newly found we cannot think of parting with it yet, or at least put off that consideration *sine die*. Like

a rustic at a fair, we are full of amazement and rapture, and have no thought of going home, or that it will soon be night. We know our existence only by ourselves, and confound our knowledge with the objects of it. We and nature are therefore one. Otherwise the illusion, the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," to which we are invited, is a mockery and a cruel insult. We do not go from a play till the last act is ended, and the lights are about to be extinguished. But the fairy face of nature still shines on: shall we be called away before the curtain falls, or ere we have scarce had a glimpse of what is going on? Like children, our step-mother nature holds us up to see the raree-show of the universe, and then, as if we were a burden to her to support, lets us fall down again. Yet what brave sublunary things does not this pageant present, like a ball or *fete* of the universe!

To see the golden sun, the azure sky, the outstretched ocean; to walk upon the green earth, and to be lord of a thousand creatures; to look down yawning precipices or over distant sunny vales; to see the world spread out under one's feet on a map; to bring the stars near; to view the smallest insects through a microscope; to read history, and consider the revolutions

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of empire and the successions of generations; to hear of the glory of Tyre, of Sidon, of Babylon, and of Susa, and to say all these were before me and are now nothing; to say I exist in such a point of time, and in such a point of space; to be a spectator and a part of its ever moving scene; to witness the change of season, of spring and autumn, of winter and summer; to feel hot and cold, pleasure and pain, beauty and deformity, right and wrong; to be sensible to the accidents of nature; to consider the mighty world of eye and ear; to listen to the stock-dove's notes amid the forest deep; to journey over moor and mountain; to hear the midnight sainted choir; to visit lighted halls, or the cathedral's gloom, or sit in crowded theatres and see life itself mocked; to study the works of art, and refine the sense of beauty to agony; to worship fame, and to dream of immortality; to look upon the Vatican, and to read Shakspeare; to gather up the wisdom of the ancients, and to pry into the future; to listen to the trump of war, the shout of victory; to question history as to the movements of the human heart; to seek for truth; to plead the cause of humanity; to overlook the world as if time and nature poured their treasures at our feet,—to be and to do all this, and then in a moment to be

nothing—to have it all snatched from us as by a juggler's trick, or a phantasmagoria! There is something in this transition from all to nothing that shocks us and damps the enthusiasm of youth new flushed with hope and pleasure, and we cast the comfortless thought as far from us as we can. In the first enjoyment of the estate of life we discard the fear of debts and duns, and never think of the final payment of our great debt to nature. Art we know is long, life we flatter ourselves should be so too. We see no end of the difficulties and delays we have to encounter: perfection is slow of attainment, and we must have time to accomplish it in. The fame of the great names we look up to is immortal: and shall not we who contemplate it imbibe a portion of ethereal fire, the *divina particula aurea*, which nothing can extinguish? A wrinkle in Rembrandt or in nature takes whole days to resolve itself into its component parts, its softenings and its sharpnesses; we refine upon our perfections, and unfold the intricacies of nature. What a prospect for the future! What a task have we not begun! And shall we be arrested in the middle of it? We do not count our time thus employed lost or our pains thrown away; we do not flag or grow tired, but gain new vigour at our endless task. Shall

nothing
 nothing

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Time then grudge us to finish what we have begun, and have formed a compact with nature to do? Why not fill up the blank that is left us in this manner? I have looked for hours at a Rembrandt without being conscious of the flight of time, but with ever new wonder and delight, have thought that not only my own but another existence I could pass in the same manner. This rarefied, refined existence seemed to have no end, nor stint, nor principle of decay in it. The print would remain long after I who looked on it had become the prey of worms. The thing seems in itself out of all reason: health, strength, appetite are opposed to the idea of death, and we are not ready to credit it till we have found our illusions vanished, and our hopes grown cold. Objects in youth from novelty, &c. are stamped upon the brain with such force and integrity that one thinks nothing can remove or obliterate them. They are riveted there, and appear to us as an element of our nature. It must be a mere violence that destroys them, not a natural decay. In the very strength of this persuasion we seem to enjoy an age by anticipation. We melt down years into a single moment of intense sympathy, and by anticipating the fruits defy the ravages of time. If then a single moment of our lives

is worth years, shall we set any limits to its total value and extent? Again, does it not happen that so secure do we think ourselves of an indefinite period of existence, that at times when left to ourselves, and impatient of novelty, we feel annoyed at what seems to us the slow and creeping progress of time, and argue that if it always moves at this tedious snail's pace it will never come to an end? How ready are we to sacrifice any space of time which separates us from a favourite object, little thinking that before long we shall find it move too fast.

For my part I started in life with the French Revolution, and I have lived, alas! to see the end of it. But I did not foresee this result. My sun arose with the first dawn of liberty, and I did not think how soon both must set. The new impulse to ardour given to men's minds imparted a congenial warmth and glow to mine; we were strong to run a race together, and I little dreamed that long before mine was set, the sun of liberty would turn to blood, or set once more in the night of despotism. Since then, I confess, I have no longer felt myself young, for with that my hopes fell.

I have since turned my thoughts to gathering up some of the fragments of my early recollections, and putting them into a form to which I

might occasionally revert. The future was barred to my progress, and I turned for consolation and encouragement to the past. It is thus that while we find our personal and substantial identity vanishing from us, we strive to gain a reflected and vicarious one in our thoughts: we do not like to perish wholly, and wish to bequeath our names, at least, to posterity. As long as we can make our cherished thoughts and nearest interests live in the minds of others, we do not appear to have retired altogether from the stage. We still occupy the breasts of others, and exert an influence and power over them, and it is only our bodies that are reduced to dust and powder. Our favourite speculations still find encouragement, and we make as great a figure in the eye of the world or perhaps a greater than in our lifetime. The demands of our self-love are thus satisfied, and these are the most imperious and unremitting. Besides, if by our intellectual superiority we survive ourselves in this world, by our virtues and faith we may attain an interest in another, and a higher state of being, and may thus be recipients at the same time of men and of angels.

“ E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.”

As we grow old, our sense of the value of time becomes vivid. Nothing else indeed seems of any consequence. We can never cease wondering that that which has ever been should cease to be. We find many things remain the same: why then should there be change in us? This adds a convulsive grasp of whatever is, a sense of fallacious hollowness in all we see. Instead of the full, pulpy feeling of youth ~~tasting existence and every object in it, all is flat and vapid, — a whited sepulchre, fair without but full of ravening and all uncleanness within.~~ The world is a witch that puts us off with false shows and appearances. The simplicity of youth, the confiding expectation, the boundless raptures, are gone: we only think of getting out of it as well as we can, and without any great mischance or annoyance. The flush of illusion, even the complacent retrospect of past joys and hopes, is over: if we can slip out of life without indignity, can escape with little bodily infirmity, and frame our minds to the calm and respectable composure of *still-life* before we return to absolute nothingness, it is as much as we can expect. ~~We do not die wholly at our deaths: we have mouldered away gradually long before.~~ Faculty after faculty, interest after interest,

attachment after attachment disappear: we are torn from ourselves while living, year after year sees us no longer the same, and death only consigns the last fragment of what we were to the grave. That we should wear out by slow stages, and dwindle at last into nothing, is not wonderful, when even in our prime our strongest impressions leave little trace but for the moment, and we are the creatures of petty circumstance. How little effect is made on us in our best days by the books we have read, the scenes we have witnessed, the sensations we have gone through! Think only of the feelings we experience in reading a fine romance (one of Sir Walter's, for instance); what beauty, what sublimity, what interest, what heart-rending emotions! You would suppose the feelings you then experience would last for ever, or subdue the mind to their own harmony and tone: while we are reading it seems as if nothing could ever after put us out of our way, or trouble us:—the first splash of mud that we get on entering the street, the first twopence we are cheated out of, the feeling vanishes clean out of our minds, and we become the prey of petty and annoying circumstance. The mind soars to the lofty: it is at home

like
Walter's
romance
never

in the grovelling, the disagreeable, and the little. And yet we wonder that age should be feeble and querulous,—that the freshness of youth should fade away. Both worlds would hardly satisfy the extravagance of our desires and our presumption.

ESSAY XVI.

THE MAIN CHANCE.

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THE MAIN CHANCE.

“ Search then the ruling passion : there alone
The wild are constant, and the cunning known,
The fool consistent, and the false sincere :
This clue once found unravels all the rest,
The prospect clears, and Wharton stands confest.”

POPE.

I AM one of those who do not think that mankind are exactly governed by reason or a cool calculation of consequences. I rather believe that habit, imagination, sense, passion, prejudice, words, make a strong and frequent diversion from the right line of prudence and wisdom. I have been told, however, that these are merely the irregularities and exceptions, and that reason forms the rule or basis; that the understanding, instead of being the sport of the capricious and arbitrary decisions of the will, generally dictates the line of conduct it is to pursue, and that self-interest or the *main chance* is the unvarying load-star of our affections or

the chief ingredient in all our motives, that thrown in as ballast gives steadiness and direction to our voyage through life. I will not take upon me to give a verdict in this cause as judge; but I will try to plead one side of it as an advocate, perhaps a biassed and feeble one.

As the passions are said to be subject to the controul of reason, and as reason is resolved (in the present case) into an attention to our own interest or a practical sense of the value of money, it will not be amiss to inquire how much of this principle itself is founded in a rational estimate of things or is calculated for the end it proposes, or how much of it will turn out (when analysed) to be mere madness and folly or a mixture, like all the rest, of obstinacy, whim, fancy, vanity, ill-nature, and so forth, or a nominal pursuit of good. This passion or an inordinate love of wealth shews itself, when it is strong, equally in two opposite ways, in saving or in spending, in avarice (or stinginess) and in extravagance. To examine each of their order. That lowest and most familiar form of covetousness, commonly called *stinginess*, is at present (it must be owned) greatly on the wane in civilised society; it has been driven out of fashion either by ridicule and good sense, or by the spread of luxury, or by supplying the mind with other

sources of interest, besides those which relate to the bare means of subsistence, so that it may almost be considered as a vice or absurdity struck off the list as a set off to some that in the change of manners and the progress of dissipation have been brought upon the stage. It is not, however, so entirely banished from the world, but that examples of it may be found to our purpose. It seems to have taken refuge in the petty provincial towns or in old baronial castles in the north of Scotland, where it is still triumphant. To go into this subject some- in detail. What is more common in these places than to stint the servants in their wages, to allowance them in the merest necessities, never to indulge them with a morsel of savoury food, and to lock up every thing from them as if they were thieves or common vagabonds broke into the house? The natural consequence is that the mistresses live in continual *hot water* with their servants, keep watch and ward over them—the pantry being in a state of siege—grudge them every mouthful, every appearance of comfort or moment of leisure, and torment their own souls every minute of their lives about what if left wholly to itself would not make a difference of five shillings at the year's end. There are families so notorious for

this kind of *surveillance* and meanness, that no servant will go to live with them; for to clench the matter, they are obliged to stay if they do, as under these amiable establishments and to provide against an evasion of their signal advantages, domestics are never hired but by the half-year. Cases have been known where servants have taken a pleasant revenge on their masters and mistresses without intending it: where the example of sordid saving and meanness having taken possession of those who in the first instance were victims to it, they have conscientiously applied it to the benefit of all parties, and scarcely suffered a thing to enter the house for the whole six months they stayed in it. To pass over, however, those cases which may plead poverty as their excuse, what shall we say to a lady of fortune (the sister of an old-fashioned Scotch laird) allowing the fruit to rot in the gardens and hot-houses of a fine old mansion in large quantities sooner than let any of it be given away in presents to the neighbours, and when peremptorily ordered by the master of the house to send a basket-full every morning to a sick friend, purchasing a small pottle for the purpose, and satisfying her mind (an intelligent and well-informed one) with this miserable subterfuge? Nay farther, the same

person, whenever they had green peas or other rarities served up at table, could hardly be prevailed on to help the guests to them, but if possible sent them away, though no other use could now be made of them, and she would never see them again! Is there common sense in this; or is it not more like madness? But is it not, at the same time, human nature? Let us stop to explain a little. In my view, the real motive of action in this and other similar cases of grasping penuriousness has no more reference to self-love (properly so called) than artificial fruit and flowers have to natural ones. A certain form or outside appearance of utility may deceive the mind, but the natural, pulpy, wholesome, nutritious substance, the principle of vitality is gone. To this callous, frigid habit of mind the real uses of things harden and crystallise; the pith and marrow are extracted out of them, leaving nothing but the husk or shell. By a regular process, the idea of property is gradually abstracted from the advantage it may be of even to ourselves; and to a well-drilled, thorough-bred Northern house-keeper (such as I have spoken of) the fruits or other produce of her garden would come at last to be things no more to be eaten or enjoyed than her jewels or trinkets, which are professedly

of no use but to be *kept* as symbols of wealth, to be occasionally looked at, and carefully guarded from the approach of any unhal-
lowed touch. The calculation of consequences or of benefit to accrue to any living person is so far from being the main-spring in this mechanical operation that it is never once thought of, or regarded with peevishness and impatience as an unwelcome intruder, because it must naturally divert the mind from the warped and false bias it has taken. The feeling of property is here removed from the sphere of practice to a chimerical and fictitious one. In the case of not sending the fruit out of the house, there might be some lurking idea of its being possibly wanted at home, that it might be sent to some one else, or made up into conserves: but when different articles of food are actually placed on the table, to hang back from using or offering them to others, is a deliberate infatuation. They *must be* destroyed, they *could not* appear again; and yet this person's heart failed her and shrunk back from the only opportunity of making the proper use of them with a petty, sensitive apprehension, as if it were a kind of sacrilege done to a cherished and favourite object. The impulse to save was become by indulgence a sort of desperate propensity and forlorn hope,

no longer the understood means, but the mistaken end: habit had completely superseded the exercise and controul of reason, and the rage of making the most of every thing *by making no use of it at all* resisted to the last moment the shocking project of feasting on a defenceless dish of green peas (that *would* fetch so much in the market) as an outrage against the Goddess of Stinginess and torture to the soul of Thrift! The principle of economy is inverted; and in order to avoid the possibility of wasting any thing, the way with such philosophers and housewives is to abstain from touching it altogether. Is not this a common error? Or are we conscious of our motives in such cases? Or do we not flatter ourselves by imputing every such act of idle folly to the necessity of adopting some sure and judicious plan to shun ruin, beggary, and the profligate abuse of wealth? An old maid in the same northern school of humanity calling upon some young ladies, her neighbours, was so alarmed and scandalized at finding the *safe* open in their absence, that she engaged herself to drink tea the same afternoon, for the express purpose of reading them a lecture on the unheard-of imprudence and impropriety of such an example, and was mobbed on her way home by the poor servant-girl (who

had been made the subject of her declamation) in return for her uncalled-for interference. *She* had nothing to fear, nothing to lose: *her* safe was carefully locked up. Why then all this flutter, fidgetty anxiety, and itch of meddling? Out of pure romantic generosity—because the idea of any thing like comfort or liberality to a servant shocked her economical and screwed-up prejudices as much as the impugning any article of her religious or moral creed could have done. The very truisms and literal refinements of this passion are then sheer impertinence. The housekeeper came into the parlour of a “*big ha’ house*,” in the same land of cakes and hospitality, to say that the workmen had refused to eat their dinner.—“Why so?”—Because there was nothing but sowins and sour milk.—“Then they must go without a dinner,” said the young mistress delighted; “there is nothing else in the house for them.” Yet the larder at that time groaned with cold rounds of beef, hams, pasties, and the other plentiful remains of a huge entertainment the day before. This was flippancy and ill-nature, as well as a wrong notion of self-interest. Is it at all wonderful that a decent servant-girl, when applied to to go to this place, laughed at the idea of a service where there was nothing to eat? Yet this

attention to the *main chance* on her part, had it come to the lady's knowledge, would have been treated as a great piece of insolence. So little conception have such people of their own obligations on the claims of others! The clergyman of the parish (prolific in this sort of anecdote), a hearty, good sort of man enough, but irritable withal, took it into his head to fly into a violent passion if ever he found the glasses or spoons left out in the kitchen, and he always went into the kitchen to look after this sort of excitement. He pretended to be mightily afraid that the one would be broken (to his irreparable loss) and the other stolen, though there was no danger of either: he wanted an excuse to fret and fume about something. On the death of his wife he sent for her most intimate friend to condole and consult with, and having made some necessary arrangements, begged as a peculiar favour that she would look into the kitchen to see if the glasses and silver spoons were in their places. She repressed a smile at such a moment out of regard to his feelings, which were serious and acute; but burst into a fit of unrestrained laughter as soon as she got home. So ridiculous a thing is human nature, even to ourselves! Either our

actions are absurd, or we are absurd in our constant censure and exposure of others. I would not from choice go into these details, but I might be required to fill up a vague outline; and the examples of folly, spite, and meanness are unfortunately "sown like a thick scurf o'er life!"

Let us turn the tables and look at the other side of this sober, solid, engrossing passion for property and its appendages. A man lays out a thousand, nay, sometimes several thousand pounds in purchasing a fine picture. This is thought by the vulgar a very fantastical folly and unaccountable waste of money. Why so? No one would give such a sum for a picture, unless there were others ready to offer nearly the same sum, and who are likely to appreciate its value and envy him the distinction. It is then a sign of taste, a proof of wealth to possess it; it is an ornament and a luxury. If the same person lays out the same sum of money in building or purchasing a fine house, or enriching it with costly furniture, no notice is taken. This is supposed to be perfectly natural and in order. Yet both are equally gratuitous pieces of extravagance, and the value of the objects is in either case equally *ideal*. It will be asked, "But what is the use of

the picture?" And what, pray, is the use of the fine house or costly furniture, unless to be looked at, to be admired, and to display the taste and magnificence of the owner? Are not pictures and statues as much furniture as gold plate or jasper tables; or does the circumstance of the former having a meaning in them and appealing to the imagination as well as to the senses, neutralize their virtue and render it entirely chimerical and visionary? It is true, every one must have a house of some kind, furnished somehow, and the superfluous so far grows imperceptibly out of the necessary. But a fine house, fine furniture is necessary to no man, nor of more value than the plainest, except as a matter of taste, of fancy, of luxury, and ostentation. Again, no doubt, if a person is in the habit of keeping a number of servants, and entertaining a succession of fashionable guests, he must have more room than he wants for himself, apartments suitably decorated to receive them, and offices and stables for their horses and retinue. But is all this unavoidably dictated as a consequence of his attention to the *main chance*, or is it not sacrificing the latter and making it a stalking-horse to his vanity, dissipation, or love of society and hospitality?

We are at least as fond of spending money as

of making it. If a man runs through a fortune in the way here spoken of, is it out of love to himself? Yet who scruples to run through a fortune in this way, or accuses himself of any extraordinary disinterestedness or love of others? One bed is as much as any one can sleep in, one room is as much as he can dine in, and he may have another for study or to retire to after dinner; but he can only want more than this for the accommodation of his friends or the admiration of the stranger. At Fonthill Abbey (to take an extreme illustration) there was not a single room fit to sit, lie, or stand in: the whole was cut up into pigeon holes, or spread out into long endless galleries. The building this huge, ill-assorted pile cost, I believe, nearly a million of money; and if the circumstance was mentioned, it occasioned an expression of surprise at the amount of the wealth that had been thus squandered; but if it was said that a hundred pounds had been laid out on a highly finished picture, there was the same astonishment expressed at its misdirection. The sympathetic auditor makes up his mind to the first and greatest outlay, by reflecting that in case of the worst the building materials alone will fetch something considerable; or in the very idea of stone walls and mortar there is something

solid and tangible, that repels the charge of frivolous levity or fine sentiment. This quaint excrescence in architecture, preposterous and ill-constructed as it was, occasioned, I suspect, many a heart-ache and bitter comparison to the throng of fashionable visitants; and I conceive it was the very want of comfort and convenience that enhanced this feeling, by magnifying as it were, from contrast the expence that had been incurred in realising an idle whim. When we judge thus perversely and invidiously of the employment of wealth by others, I cannot think that we are guided in our own choice of means to ends by a simple calculation of downright use and personal accommodation. The gentleman, who purchased Fonhill, and was supposed to be possessed of wealth enough to purchase half a dozen more Fonhills, lived there himself for some time in a state of the greatest retirement; rose at six, and read till four, rode out for an hour for the benefit of the air, and dined abstemiously for the sake of his health. I could do all this myself. What then became of the rest of his fortune? It was lying in the funds or embarked in business to make it yet greater: that he might still rise at six and read till four, &c. It was of no other earthly use to him; for he did not wish to make a figure, in

the world, or to throw it away on studs of horses, or equipages, entertainments, gaming, electioneering, subscriptions to charitable institutions, mistresses, or any of the usual fashionable modes of squandering wealth for the amusement and wonder of others and our own fancied enjoyment. Mr Farquhar did not probably lay out five hundred a-year on himself: yet it cost Mr Beckford, who also led a life of perfect seclusion, twenty thousand a-year to defray the expenses of his table and of his household establishment. When I find that such and so various are the tastes of men, I am a little puzzled to know what is meant by self-interest, of which some persons talk so fluently, as if it was a *jack-in-a-box*, which they could take out and show you, and which they tell you is the object that all men equally aim at. If money, is it for its own sake, or the sake of other things? Is it to hoard it, or to spend it on ourselves or others? In all these points, we find the utmost diversity and contradiction, both of feeling and practice. Certainly he who puts his money into a strong box, and he who puts it into a dice-box, must be allowed to have a very different idea of the *main chance*. If by this phrase be understood a principle of self-preservation, I grant that while we live, we must not starve, and that

necessity has no law. Beyond this point, all seems nearly left to chance or whim, and so far are all the world from being agreed in their definition of this redoubtable term, that one half of them may be said to think and act in diametrical opposition to the other.

Avarice is the miser's dream, as fame is the poet's. A calculation of physical profit or loss is almost as much out of the question in the one case as in the other. The one has set his mind on gold, the other on praise, as the *summum bonum* or object of his bigoted idolatry and daily contemplation, not for any private and sinister ends. It is the immediate pursuit, not the remote or reflex consequence that gives wings to the passion. There is indeed a reference to self in either case that fixes and concentrates it, but not a gross or sordid one. Is not the desire to accumulate and leave a vast estate behind us, equally romantic with the desire to leave a posthumous name behind us? Is not the desire of distinction, of something to be known and remembered by, the paramount consideration? And are not the privations we undergo, the sacrifices and exertions we make for either object nearly akin? A child makes a huge snow-ball to show his skill and perseverance, and as something to wonder at, not

that he can swallow it as an ice, or warm his hands at it, and though the next day's sun will dissolve it; and the man accumulates a pile of wealth for the same reason principally, or to find employment for his time, his imagination, and his will. I deny that to watch and superintend the return of millions can be of any other use to him than to watch the returns of the heavenly bodies, or to calculate their distances, or to contemplate eternity, or infinity, or the sea, or the dome of St Peter's, or any other object that excites curiosity and interest from its magnitude and importance. Do we not look at the most barren mountain with thrilling awe and wonder? And is it strange that we should gaze at a mountain of gold with satisfaction, when we can besides say, "This is ours, with all the power that belongs to it?" Every passion, however plodding or prosaic, has its poetical side. A miser is the true alchemist, the magician in his cell; who overlooks a mighty experiment, who sees dazzling visions, and who wields the will of others at his nod, but to whom all other hopes and pleasures are dead, and who is cut off from all connexion with his kind. He lives in a splendid hallucination; a waking trance, and so far it is well: but if he thinks he has any other

need or use for all this endless store (any more than to swill the ocean), he deceives himself, and is no conjuror after all. He goes on, however, mechanically adding to his stock, and fancying that great riches is great gain, that every particle that swells the heap is something in reserve against the evil day, and a defence against that poverty which he dreads more the farther he is removed from it, as the more giddy the height to which we have attained, the more frightful does the gulph yawn below—so easily does habit get the mastery of reason, and so nearly is passion allied to madness!—But he is laying up for his heirs and successors:—in toiling for them, and sacrificing himself, is he properly attending to the *main chance*?

This is the turn the love of money takes in cautious, dry, recluse, and speculative minds. If it were the pure and abstract love of money, it could take no other turn but this. But in a different class of characters, the sociable, the vain, and imaginative, it takes just the contrary one, *viz.* to expence, extravagance, and ostentation. It here loves to display itself in every fantastic shape and with every reflected lustre; in houses, in equipage, in dress, in a retinue of friends and dependents, in horses, in hounds—to glitter in the eye of fashion, to be echoed

by the roar of folly, and buoyed up for a while like a bubble on the surface of vanity, to sink all at once and irrecoverably into an abyss of ruin and bankruptcy. Does it foresee this result? Does it care for it? What, then, becomes of the calculating principle, that can neither be hood-winked nor bribed from its duty? Does it do nothing for us in this critical emergency? It is blind, deaf, and insensible to all but the noise, confusion, and glare of objects by which it is fascinated and lulled into a fatal repose! One man ruins himself by the vanity of associating with lords, another by his love of low company; one by his fondness for building, another by his rage for keeping open house and private theatricals; one by philosophical experiments, another by embarking in every ticklish and fantastical speculation that is proposed to him; one throws away an estate on a law-suit, another on a die, a third on a horse-race, a fourth on *virtù*, a fifth on a drab, a sixth on a contested election, &c. There is no dearth of instances to fill the page or complete the group of profound calculators, of inflexible martyrs to the *main chance*. Let any of these discreet and well-advised persons have the veil torn from their darling follies by experience, and be gifted with a double share of wisdom and a second

fortune to dispose of, and each of them, so far from being warned by experience or disaster, will only be the more resolutely bent to assert the independence of his choice and throw it away the self-same road the other went before,—on his vanity in associating with lords, on his love of low company, on his fondness for building, on his rage for keeping open house or private theatricals, on philosophical experiments, on fantastic speculations, on a law-suit, on a dice-box, on a favourite horse, on a picture, on a mistress, or election contest, and so on through the whole of the chapter of accidents and cross-purposes. There is an admirable description of this sort of infatuation with folly and ruin in Madame D'Arblay's account of Harrel in 'Cecilia;' and though the picture is highly wrought and carried to the utmost length, yet I maintain that the principle is common. I myself have known more than one individual in the same predicament; and therefore cannot think that the deviations from the line of strict prudence and wisdom are so rare or trifling as the theory I am opposing represents them, or I must have been singularly unfortunate in my acquaintance. Out of a score of persons of this class I could mention several that have ruined their fortunes out of mere freak, others that are in a state of

dotage and imbecility for fear of being robbed of all they are worth. The rest care nothing about the matter. So that this boasted and unfailing attention to the *main chance* resolves itself, when strong, into mad profusion or griping penury, or if weak, is null and yields to other motives. Such is the conclusion to which my observation of life has led me: if I am quite wrong, it is hard that in a world abounding in such characters I should not have met with a single practical philosopher.*

A girl in a country-town resolves never to

* Mr Bentham proposes to new-model the penal code on the principle of a cool and systematic calculation of consequences. Yet of all philosophers, the candidates for Panopticons and Penitentiaries are the most short-sighted and refractory. Punishment has scarcely any effect upon them. Thieves steal under the scaffold; and if a person's previous feelings and habits do not prevent his running the risk of the gallows, be assured that the fear of consequences or his having already escaped it, with all the good resolutions he may have made on the occasion, will not prevent his exposing himself to it a second time. It is true most people have a natural aversion to being hanged. The perseverance of culprits in their evil courses seems a fatality, which is strengthened by the prospect of what is to follow. Mr Bentham argues that all men act from calculation, "even madmen reason." So far it may be true that the world is not unlike a great Bedlam, or answers to the title of an old play—"A mad world my masters."

marry any one under a duke or a lord. Good. This may be very well as an ebullition of spleen or vanity; but is there much common sense or regard to her own satisfaction in it? Were there any likelihood of her succeeding in her resolution, she would not make it; for it is the very distinction to be attained that piques her ambition, and leads her to gratify her conceit of herself by affecting to look down on any lower matches. Let her suffer ever so much mortification or chagrin in the prosecution of her scheme, it only confirms her the more in it: the spirit of contradiction and the shame of owning herself defeated, increase with every new disappointment and every year of painful probation. At least this is the case while she chooses to think there is any chance left. But what, after all, is this haughty and ridiculous pretension founded on? Is it owing to a more commanding view and a firmer grasp of consequences, or of her own interest? No such thing: she is as much captivated by the fancied sound of "My Lady," and dazzled by the image of a coronet-coach, as the girl who marries a footman is smit with his broad shoulders, laced coat, and rosy cheeks. "But why must I be always in extremes? Few Misses make vows of celibacy or marry their footmen." Take then the broad question:—Do they generally marry from the convictions of the understanding, or

make the choice that is most likely to ensure their future happiness, or that they themselves approve afterwards? I think the answer must be in the negative; and yet love and marriage are among the weightiest and most serious concerns of life. Mutual regard, good temper, good sense, good character, or a conformity of tastes and dispositions, have notoriously and lamentably little to say in it. On the contrary, it is most frequently those things that pique and provoke opposition, instead of those which promise concord and sympathy, that decide the choice and inflame the will by the love of conquest, or of overcoming difficulty. Or it is a complexion, or a fine set of teeth, or air, or dress, or a fine person, or false calves, or affected consequence, or a reputation for gallantry, or a flow of spirits, or a flow of words, or forward coquetry, or assumed indifference,—something that appeals to the senses, the fancy, or to our pride, and determines us to throw away our happiness for life. Neither, then, in this case, on which so much depends, are the *main chance* and our real interest by any means the same thing.

“ Now all ye ladies of fair Scotland,
And ladies of England that happy would prove,
Marry never for houses, nor marry for land,
Nor marry for nothing but only love.”*—*Old Ballad*.

* “ Have I not seen a household where love was not ? ”

Or take the passion of love where it has other objects and consequences in view. Is reason any match for the poison of this passion, where it has been once imbibed? I might just as well be told that reason is a cure for madness or the bite of a venomous serpent. Are not health, fortune, friends, character, peace of mind, every thing sacrificed to its idlest impulse? Are the instances rare, or are they not common and tragical? The *main chance* does not serve the turn here. Does the prospect of certain ruin break the fascination to its frail victim, or does it not render the conquest more easy and secure that the seducer has already triumphed over and deserted a hundred other victims? A man *à bonnes fortunes* is the most irresistible personage in the lists of gallantry. Take drunkenness again, that vice which till within these few years (and even still) was fatal to the health, the constitution, the fortunes of so many thousands, and the peace of so many families in Great Britain. I would ask what remonstrance of says the author of the 'Betrothed;' "where, although there was worth and good will, and enough of the means of life, all was imbittered by regrets, which were not only vain, but criminal?"—"I would take the *Ghost's* word for a thousand pound," or in preference to that of any man living, though I was told in the streets of Edinburgh, that Dr Jamieson, the author of the 'Dictionary,' was quite as great a man!

friends, what lessons of experience, what resolutions of amendment, what certainty of remorse and suffering, however exquisite, would deter the confirmed sot (where the passion for this kind of excitement had once become habitual and the immediate want of it was felt) from indulging his propensity and taking his full swing, notwithstanding the severe and imminent punishment to follow upon his excess? The consequence of not abstaining from his favourite beverage is not doubtful and distant (a thing in the clouds) but close at his side, staring him in the face, and felt perhaps in all its aggravations that very morning, yet the recollection of this and of the next day's dawn is of no avail against the momentary craving and head-long impulse given by the first application of the glass to his lips. The present temptation is indeed heightened by the threatened alternative. I know this as a rule, that the stronger the repentance, the surer the relapse and the more hopeless the cure! The being engrossed by the present moment, by the present feeling, whatever it be, whether of pleasure or pain, is the evident cause of both. Few instances have been known of a final reformation on this head. Yet it is a clear case; and reason, if it were that giant that it is represented in any thing

but ledgers and books of accounts, would put down the abuse in an instant. It is true, this infirmity is more particularly chargeable to the English and to other Northern nations, and there has been a considerable improvement among us of late years; but I suspect it is owing to a change of manners and to the opening of new sources of amusement (without the aid of ardent spirits flung in to relieve the depression of our animal spirits) more than to the excellent treatises which have been written against the use of fermented liquors, or to an increasing, tender regard to our own comfort, health, and happiness in the breast of individuals. We still find plenty of ways of tormenting ourselves and sporting with the feelings of others! I will say nothing of a passion for gaming here as too obvious an illustration of what I mean. It is more rare, and hardly to be looked on as epidemic with us. But few that have dabbled in this vice have not become deeply involved, and few (or none) that have done so have ever retraced their steps or returned to sober calculations of the *main chance*. The majority, it is true, are not gamesters; but where the passion does exist, it completely tyrannizes over and stifles the voice of common sense, reason, and humanity. How many

victims has the point of honour! I will not pretend that, as matters stand, it may not be necessary to fight a duel, under certain circumstances and on certain provocations, even in a prudential point of view (though this again proves how little the maxims and practices of the world are regulated by a mere consideration of personal safety and welfare); but I do say that the rashness with which this responsibility is often incurred, and the even seeking for trifling causes of quarrel shows any thing but a consistent regard to self-interest as a general principle of action, or rather betrays a total recklessness of consequences, when opposed to pique, petulance, or passion.

Before I proceed to answer a principal objection (and indeed a staggering one at first sight) I will mention here, that I think it strongly confirms my view of human nature, that men form their opinions much more from prejudice than reason. The proof that they do so is that they form such opposite ones, when the abstract premises and independent evidence are the same. How few Calvinists become Lutherans! How few Papists Protestants! How few Tories Whigs!* Each shuts his eyes equally to facts

* *Certes*, more Whigs become Tories. This may also be accounted for satisfactorily, though not very rationally.

or arguments, and persists in the view of the subject that custom, pride, and obstinacy, dictate. Interest is no more regarded than reason; for it is often at the risk both of life and fortune that these opinions have been maintained, and it is uniformly when parties have run highest, and the strife has been deadliest, that people have been most forward to stake their existence and every thing belonging to them on some unintelligible dogma or article of an old-fashioned creed. Half the wars and fightings, martyrdoms, persecutions, feuds, antipathies, heart-burnings in the world have been about some distinction, "some trick not worth an egg"—so ready are mankind to sacrifice their all to a mere name! It may be urged, that the good of our souls, or our welfare in a future state of being, is a rational and well-grounded motive for these religious extravagances. And this is true, so far as religious zeal falls in with men's passions or the spirit of the times. A bigot was formerly ready to cut his neighbour's throat to go to Heaven, but not so ready to reform his own life, or give up a single vice or gratification, notwithstanding all the pains and penalties denounced upon it, and of which his faith in Holy Church did not suffer him to doubt a moment!

But it is contended here, that in matters not of doctrinal speculation, but of private life and domestic policy, every one consults and understands his own interest; that, whatever other *hobbies* he may have, he minds this as the main object, and contrives to make both ends meet, in spite of seeming inattention and real difficulties. "If we look around us," says a shrewd, hard-headed Scotchman, "and take examples from the neighbourhood in which we live, we shall find that, allowing for occasional exceptions, diversities, and singularities, the *main chance* is still stuck to with rigid and unabated pertinacity—the accounts are wound up, and every thing is right at the year's end, whatever freaks or fancies may have intervened in the course of it. The business of life goes on (which is the principal thing), and every man's house stands on its own bottom. This is the case in Nicholson street, in the next street to it, and in the next street to that, and in the whole of Edinburgh, Scotland, and England, to boot." This, I allow, is a *home thrust*, and I must parry it how I can. It is a kind of heavy broad-wheeled waggon of an objection, that makes a formidable, awkward appearance, and takes up so much of the road, that I shall have a lucky escape if I can dash by it in my light gig

without being upset or crushed to atoms. The persons who in the present instance have the charge of it in its progress through the streets of Edinburgh are a constitutional lawyer, a political economist, an opposition editor, and an ex-officio surveyor of the customs—fearful odds against one poor metaphysician! Their machine of human life, I confess, puts me a little in mind of those square-looking caravans one sometimes meets on the road, in which they transport wild beasts from place to place; and dull, heavy, safe, and flat as they look, the inmates continue their old habits; the monkeys play their tricks, and the panthers lick their jaws for human blood, though cramped and confined in their excursions. So the vices and follies, when they cannot break loose, do their worst *inside* this formal conveyance, the *main chance*. As this ovation is intended to pass up High street for the honour of the Scottish capital, I should wish it to stop at the shop-door of Mr Bartholine Saddletree, to see if he is at home, or in the courts. Also to inquire whether the suit of Peter Peebles is yet ended; and to take the opinion of counsel how many of the Highland lairds, or Scottish noblemen and gentlemen, that were *out* in the Fifteen and the Forty-five, periled their lives and fortunes in the “good

cause" from an eye to the *main chance*? The Baron of Bradwardine would have scorned such a suggestion; nay, it would have been below Balmawhapple or even Killancureit. But "the age of chivalry is gone, and that of sophists, economists, and calculators, has succeeded." I should say that the risk, the secrecy, the possibility of the leaders having their heads stuck on Temple Bar and their estates confiscated were among the foremost causes that inflamed their zeal and stirred their blood to the enterprise. Hardship, danger, exile, death, these words smack of honour more than the *main chance*. The modern Scotch may be loyal on this thriving principle: their ancestors found their loyalty a very losing concern, yet they persevered in it till, and long after, it became a desperate cause. But patriotism and loyalty (true or false) are important and powerful principles in human affairs, though not always selfish and calculating. Honour is one great standard-bearer and puissant leader in the struggle of human life; and less than honour (a nickname or a bug-bear) is enough to set the multitude together by the ears, whether in civil, religious, or private brawls. But to return to our Edinburgh shop-keepers, those practical models of wisdom, and authentic epitomes of

human nature. Say that by their "canny ways and pawky looks" they keep their names out of the 'Gazette,' yet still care (not the less perhaps) mounts behind their counters, and sits in their back-shops. A tradesman is not a bankrupt at the year's end. But what does it signify, if he is hen-pecked in the mean time, or quarrels with his wife, or beats his apprentices, or has married a woman twice as old as himself for her money, or has been jilted by his maid, or fuddles himself every night, or is laying in an apoplexy by over-eating himself, or is believed by nobody, or is a furious Whig or Tory, or a knave, or a fool, or one envious of the success of his neighbours, or dissatisfied with his own, or surly, or eaten up with indolence and procrastination, never easy but bashful and awkward in company (though with a vast desire to shine) or has some personal defect or weak side on which the Devil is sure to assail him, and the venting his spleen and irritability on which, through some loop-hole or other, makes the real business and torment of his life—that of his shop may go on as it pleases. Such is the perfection of reason and the triumph of the sovereign good, where there are no strong passions to disturb, or no great vices to sully it! The humours collect, the

will will have head, the petty passions ferment, and we start some grievance or other, and hunt it down every hour in the day, or the machine of *still-life* could not go on even in North Britain. But were I to grant the full force and extent of the objection, I should still say that it does not bear upon my view of the subject or general assertion, that reason is an unequal match for passion. Business is a kind of gaoler or task-master, that keeps its vassals in good order while they are under its eye, as the slave or culprit performs his task with the whip hanging over him, and punishment immediately to follow neglect; but the question is, what he would do with his recovered freedom, or what course the mind will for the most part pursue, when in the range of its general conduct it has its choice to make between a distant, doubtful, sober, rational good (or *average* state of being), and some one object of comparatively little value, that strikes the senses, flatters our pride, gives scope to the imagination, and has all the strength of passion and inclination on its side. The *main chance* then is a considerable exception, but not a fair one or a case in point, since it falls under a different head and line of argument. The fault of reason in general (which takes in the *whole* instead of parts) is that its

objects, though of the utmost extent and importance, are not defined and tangible. This fault cannot be found with the pursuit of trade and commerce. It is not a mere dry abstract, undefined, speculative, however steady and well-founded conviction of the understanding. It has other levers and pullies to enforce it, besides those of reason and reflection; as follows :—

1. The value of money is positive or specific. The interest in it is a sort of mathematical interest, reducible to number and quantity. Ten is always more than one; a part is never greater than the whole; the good we seek or attain in this way has a technical denomination; and I do not deny that in matters of strict calculation, the principle of calculation will naturally bear great sway. The returns of profit and loss are regular and mechanical, and the operations of business or the *main chance* are so too. But commonly speaking, we judge by the *degree* of excitement, not by the ultimate quantity. Thus we prefer a draught of nectar to the recovery of our health, and are on most occasions ready to exclaim,—

“ An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour.”

Yet there is a point at which self-will and humour stop. A man will take brandy, which

is a *kind of slow poison*, but he will not take *actual* poison knowing it to be such, however slow the operation or bewitching the taste; because here the effect is absolutely fixed and certain, not variable, nor in the power of the imagination to elude or trifle with it. I see no courage in battle, but in going on what is called the *forlorn hope*.

2. Business is also an affair of habit: it calls for incessant and daily application; and what was at first a matter of necessity to supply our wants, becomes often a matter of necessity to employ our time. The man of business wants work for his head; the labourer and mechanic for his hands; so that the love of action, of difficulty and competition, the stimulus of success or failure is perhaps as strong an ingredient in men's ordinary pursuits as the love of gain. We find persons pursuing science or any *hobby-horsical* whim or handicraft that they have taken a fancy to, or persevering in a losing concern with just the same ardour and obstinacy. As to the choice of a pursuit in life, a man may not be forward to engage in business, but being once in, does not like to turn back amidst the pity of friends and the derision of enemies. How difficult is it to prevent those who have a turn for any art or science from going into these

pursuits, however unprofitable ! Nay, how difficult is it often to prevent those who have no turn that way, but prefer starving to a certain income ! If there is one in a family brighter than the rest, he is immediately designed for one of the learned professions. Really, the dull and plodding people of the world have not much reason to boast of their superior wisdom or numbers : they are in an involuntary majority !

3. The value of money is an *exchangeable* value ; that is, this pursuit is available towards and convertible into a great many others. A person is in want of money, and mortgages an estate to throw it away upon a round of entertainments and company. The passion or motive here is not a hankering after money, but society, and the individual will ruin himself for this object. Another, who has the same passion for show, and a certain style of living, tries to gain a fortune in trade to indulge it, and only goes to work in a more round-about way. I remember a story of a common mechanic at Manchester, who laid out the hard-earned savings of the week in hiring a horse and livery-servant to ride behind him to Stockport every Sunday, and to dine there at an ordinary, like a gentleman. The pains bestowed upon the *main*

chance here was only a cover for another object, which exercised a ridiculous predominance over his mind. Money will purchase a horse, a house, a picture, leisure, dissipation, or whatever the individual has a fancy for, that is to be purchased; but it does not follow that he is fond of all these, or of whatever will promote his real interest, because he is fond of money, but that he has a passion for some one of these objects, to which he would probably sacrifice all the rest, and his own peace and happiness into the bargain.

4. The *main chance* is an instrument of various passions, but is directly opposed to none of them, with the single exception of indolence, or the *vis inertiae*, which of itself is seldom strong enough to master it, without the aid of some other incitement. A barrister sticks to his duty, as long as he has only his love of ease to conquer; but he flings up his briefs or neglects them, if he thinks he can make a figure in Parliament. A servant-girl stays in her place and does her work, though perhaps lazy and slatternly, because no immediate temptation occurs strong enough to interfere with the necessity of gaining her bread, but she goes away with a bastard-child, because here passion and desire come into play, though the consequence is that

she loses not only her place, but her character and every prospect in life. No one, therefore, flings away the *main chance* without a motive, any more than he voluntarily puts his hand into the fire or breaks his neck by jumping out of window. A man must live; the first step is a point of necessity: every man would live well, the second is a point of luxury. The having or even acquiring wealth does not prevent our enjoying it in various ways. A man may give his mornings to business, and his evenings to pleasure. There is no contradiction in this; nor does he sacrifice his ruling passion by this, any more than the man of letters by study, or the soldier by an attention to discipline. Reason and passion are opposed, not passion and business. The sot, the glutton, the debauchee, the gamester, must all have money, to make their own use of it, and they may indulge all these passions and their avarice at the same time. It is only when the last becomes the ruling passion that it puts a prohibition on the others. In that case, every thing else is lost sight of; but it is seldom carried to this length, or when it is, it is far from being another name, either in its means or ends, for reason, sense, or happiness, as I have already shown.

I have taken no notice hitherto of ambition

or virtue, or scarcely of the pursuits of fame or intellect. Yet all these are important and respectable divisions of the map of human life. Who ever charged Mr Pitt with a want of common sense, because he did not die worth a plumb? Had it been proposed to Lord Byron to forfeit every penny of his estate, or every particle of his reputation, would he have hesitated to part with the former? Is not a loss of character, a stain upon honour, as severe a blow as any reverse of fortune? Do not the richest heiresses in the city marry for a title, and think themselves well off? Are there not patriots who think or dream all their lives about their country's good; philanthropists who rave about liberty and humanity at a certain yearly loss? Are there not studious men who never once thought of bettering their circumstances? Are not the liberal professions held more respectable than business, though less lucrative? Might not most people do better than they do, but that they postpone their interest to their indolence, their taste for reading, their love of pleasure, or to some other influence? And is it not generally understood that all men can make a fortune or succeed in the *main chance*, who have but that one idea in their heads? Lastly, are there not those who pursue

or husband wealth for their own good, for the benefit of their friends or the relief of the distressed? But as the examples are rare, and might be supposed to make against myself, I shall not insist upon them. I think I have said enough to vindicate or apologize for my first position—

“ Masterless passion sways us to the mood
Of what it likes or loaths;”

—or if not to make good my ground, to march
out with flying colours and beat of drum !

ESSAY XVII.

ON THE OPERA.

ESSAY XVII.

THE OPERA.

THE Opera is a fine thing: the only question is whether it is not too fine. It is the most fascinating, and at the same time the most tantalising of all places. It is not the *too little*, but the *too much*, that offends us. Every object is there collected, and displayed in ostentatious profusion, that can strike the senses or dazzle the imagination; music, dancing, painting, poetry, architecture, the blaze of beauty, “the glass of fashion, and the mould of form;” and yet one is not satisfied—for the multitude and variety of objects distract the attention, and by flattering us with a vain show of the highest gratification of every faculty and wish, leave us at last in a state of listlessness, disappointment, and *ennui*. The powers of the mind are exhausted, without being invigorated; our expectations are excited, not satisfied; and we are at some loss to distinguish an excess of

irritation from the height of enjoyment. To sit at the Opera for a whole evening, is like undergoing the process of animal magnetism for the same length of time. It is an illusion and a mockery, where the mind is made "the fool of the senses," and cheated of itself; where pleasure after pleasure courts us, as in a fairy palace; where the Graces and the Muses, waving in a gay, fantastic round with one another, still turn from our pursuit; where art, like an enchantress with a thousand faces, still allures our giddy admiration, shifts her mask, and again disappoints us. The Opera, in short, proceeds upon a false estimate of taste and morals; it supposes that the capacity for enjoyment may be multiplied with the objects calculated to afford it. It is a species of intellectual prostitution; for we can no more receive pleasure from all our faculties at once than we can be in love with a number of mistresses at the same time. Though we have different senses, we have but one heart; and if we attempt to force it into the service of them all at once, it must grow restive or torpid, hardened or enervated. The spectator may say to the sister-arts of Painting, Poetry, and Music, as they advance to him in a *pas-de-trois* at the Opera, "How happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmers

away ;” but while “ they all tease him together,” the heart gives a satisfactory answer to none of them ;—is ashamed of its want of resources to supply the repeated calls upon its sensibility, seeks relief from the importunity of endless excitement in fastidious apathy or affected levity ; and in the midst of luxury, pomp, vanity, indolence, and dissipation, feels only the hollow, aching void within, the irksome craving of unsatisfied desire, because more pleasures are placed within its reach than it is capable of enjoying, and the interference of one object with another ends in a double disappointment. Such is the best account I can give of the nature of the Opera,—of the contradiction between our expectations of pleasure and our uneasiness there,—of our very jealousy of the flattering appeals which are made to our senses, our passions, and our vanity, on all sides,—of the little relish we acquire for it, and the distaste it gives us for other things. Any one of the sources of amusement to be found there would be enough to occupy and keep the attention alive ; the *tout ensemble* fatigues and oppresses it. One may be stifled to death with roses. [A head-ache may be produced by a profusion of sweet smells or of sweet sounds : but we do not like the head-ache the more on

that account. Nor are we reconciled to it, even at the Opera.

What makes the difference between an opera of Mozart's and the singing of a thrush confined in a wooden cage at the corner of the street? The one is nature, and the other is art: the one is paid for, and the other is not. Madame Fodor sang the air of *Vedrai Carino* in 'Don Giovanni' so divinely, because she was hired to sing it; she sang it to please the audience, not herself, and did not always like to be *encored* in it; but the thrush that awakes at day-break with its song, does not sing because it is paid to sing, or to please others, or to be admired or criticised. It sings because it is happy: it pours the thrilling sounds from its throat, to relieve the overflowings of its own heart—the liquid notes come from, and go to the heart, dropping balm into it, as the gushing spring revives the traveller's parched and fainting lips. That stream of joy comes pure and fresh to the longing sense, free from art and affectation; the same that rises over vernal groves, mingled with the breath of morning, and the perfumes of the wild hyacinth; it waits for no audience, it wants no rehearsing, and still —

“Hymns its good God, and carols sweet of love.”

This is the great difference between nature and art, that the one *is* what the other *seems*, and gives all the pleasure it expresses, because it feels it itself. Madame Fodor sang, as a musical instrument may be made to play a tune, and perhaps with no more real delight: but it is not so with the linnet or the thrush, that sings because God pleases, and pours out its little soul in pleasure. This is the reason why its singing is (so far) so much better than melody or harmony, than bass or treble, than the Italian or the German school, than quavers or crotchets, or half-notes, or canzonets, or quartetts, or any thing in the world but truth and nature!

The Opera is the most artificial of all things. It is not only art, but ostentatious, unambiguous, exclusive art. It does not subsist as an imitation of nature, but in contempt of it; and instead of seconding, its object is to pervert and sophisticate all our natural impressions of things. When the Opera first made its appearance in this country, there were strong prejudices entertained against it, and it was ridiculed as a species of the *mock-heroic*. The prejudices have worn out with time, and the ridicule has ceased; but the grounds for both remain the same in the nature of the thing itself. At the theatre, we see and hear what has been said,

thought, and done by various people elsewhere : at the Opera, we see and hear what was never said, thought, or done any where but at the Opera. Not only is all communication with nature cut off, but every appeal to the imagination is sheathed and softened in the melting medium of Siren sounds. The ear is cloyed and glutted with warbled ecstasies or agonies ; while every avenue to terror or pity is carefully stopped up and guarded by song and recitative. Music is not made the vehicle of poetry, but poetry of music ; the very meaning of the words is lost or refined away in the effeminacy of a foreign language. A grand serious Opera is a tragedy wrapped up in soothing airs, to suit the tender feelings of the nurslings of fortune—where tortured victims swoon on beds of roses, and the pangs of despair sink in tremulous accents into downy repose. Just so much of human misery is given as to lull those who are exempted from it into a deeper sense of their own security : just enough of the picture of human life is shewn to relieve their languor, without disturbing their indifference ;—not to excite their sympathy, but “with some sweet, oblivious antidote,” to pamper their sleek and sordid apathy. In a word, the whole business of the Opera is to stifle emotion in its birth, and

to intercept every feeling in its progress to the heart. Every impression that, left to itself, might sink deep into the mind, and wake it to real sympathy, is overtaken and baffled by means of some other impression, plays round the surface of the imagination, trembles into airy sound, or expires in an empty pageant. In the grand carnival of the senses the pulse of life is suspended, the link which binds us to humanity is broken; the soul is fretted by the sense of excessive softness into a feverish hectic dream; truth becomes a fable; good and evil matters of perfect indifference, except as they can be made subservient to our selfish gratification; and there is hardly a vice for which the mind on coming out of the Opera is not prepared, no virtue of which it is capable!

But what shall I say of the company at the Opera? Is it not grand, select, splendid, and imposing? Do we not see there "the flower of Britain's warriors, her statesmen, and her fair," her nobles and her diplomatic characters? First, one only knows the diplomatic characters by their taking prodigious quantities of snuff, and as to the great warriors, some that I know had better not show their faces—if there is any truth in physiognomy; and as to great men, I know of but one in modern times, and neither Europe

nor the Opera-house was big enough to hold him. With respect to Lords and Ladies, we see them as we do gilded butterflies in glass cases. We soon get tired of them, for they seem tired of themselves and one another. They gape, stare, affect to whisper, laugh, or talk loud, to fill up the vacuities of thought and expression. They do not gratify our predilection for happy faces! But do we not feel the throb of pleasure from the blaze of beauty in the side-boxes? That blaze would be brighter, were it not quenched in the sparkling of diamonds. As for the rest, *the grapes are sour*. Beauty is a thing that is not made only to be seen. Who can behold it without a transient wish to be near it, to adore, to possess it? He must be a fool or a coxcomb, whom the sight of a beauty dazzles, but does not warm; whom a thousand glances shot from a thousand heavenly faces pierce without wounding; who can behold without a pang the bowers of Paradise opening to him by a thousand doors, and barred against him by magic spells!—Bright creatures, fairest of the fair, ye shine above our heads, bright as Ariadne's crown, fair as the dewy star of evening: but ye are no more to us! There is no golden chain let down to us from you: we have sometimes seen you at a play, or

caught a glimpse of your faces passing in a coronet-coach; but—As I am growing romantic, I shall take a turn into the *crush-room*, where, following the train of the great statesmen, the warriors, and the diplomatic characters, I shall meet with a nearly equal display of external elegance and accomplishment, without the pride of sex, rank, or virtue! If the women were all Junos before, here they are all Venuses, and no less Goddesses! Those who complained of inaccessible beauty before, may here find beauty more accessible, and take their revenge on the boxes in the lobbies!

ESSAY XVIII.

**OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO
HAVE SEEN.**

ESSAY XVIII.

OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN.

“Come like shadows—so depart.”

LAMB it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both—a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen—

“Never so sure our rapture to create
As when it touched the brink of all we hate.”

Compared with him I shall, I fear, make but a common-place piece of business of it; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and besides I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I

suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism; the others I am not bound to follow farther than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, A— said, “I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr Locke?” In this A—, as usual, reckoned without his host. Every one burst out a laughing at the expression of Lamb’s face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. “Yes, the greatest names,” he stammered out hastily, “but they were not persons—not persons.”— “Not persons?” said A—, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. “That is,” rejoined Lamb, “not characters, you know. By Mr Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, you mean the ‘Essay on the Human Understanding,’ and the ‘Principia,’ which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see any one *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were

very like Kneller's portraits of them. But who could paint Shakspeare?"—"Ay," retorted A—, "there it is; then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead?"—"No," said Lamb, "neither. I have seen so much of Shakspeare on the stage and on book-stalls, in frontispieces and on mantel-pieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition: and as to Milton's face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like; it is too starched and puritanical; and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian's band and gown."—"I shall guess no more," said A—: "Who is it; then, you would like to see 'in his habit as he lived,' if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature?" Lamb then named Sir Thomas Brown and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their night-gown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them. At this A— laughed outright, and conceived Lamb was jesting with him; but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and

waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. Lamb then (as well as I can remember a conversation that passed twenty years ago—how time slips!) went on as follows. “The reason why I pitch upon these two authors is, that their writings are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles; and I should like to ask them the meaning of what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr Johnson, I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him: he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and other writers like him are sufficiently explicit: my friends, whose repose I should be tempted to disturb (were it in my power), are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

“When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose-composition the ‘Urn-burial,’ I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the

lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees! As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own 'Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus,' a truly formidable and inviting personage: his style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous a commentator!"—"I am afraid in that case," said A—, "that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit might be lost;"—and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while Lamb continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and whose meaning was often quite as *uncomeatable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. The volume was produced; and while some one was expatiating on the exquisite simplicity and beauty of the portrait prefixed to the old edition, A— got hold of the poetry, and exclaiming "What have we here?" read the following:—

“ Here lies a She-Sun and a He-Moon there,
 She gives the best light to his sphere,
 Or each is both and all, and so
 They unto one another nothing owe.”

There was no resisting this, till Lamb seizing the volume, turned to the beautiful ‘Lines to his Mistress,’ dissuading her from accompanying him abroad, and read them with suffused features and a faltering tongue.

“ By our first strange and fatal interview,
 By all desires which thereof did ensue,
 By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
 Which my words’ masculine persuasive force
 Begot in thee, and by the memory
 Of hurts, which spies and rivals threaten’d me,
 I calmly beg. But by thy father’s wrath,
 By all pains which want and divorcement hath,
 I conjure thee ; and all the oaths which I
 And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy
 Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,
 Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.
 Temper, oh fair Love ! love’s impetuous rage,
 Be my true mistress still, not my feign’d Page ;
 I’ll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind
 Thee ! only worthy to nurse it in my mind.
 Thirst to come back ; oh, if thou die before,
 My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.
 Thy (else almighty) beauty cannot move
 Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love.
 Nor tame wild Boreas’ harshness ; thou hast read
 How roughly he in pieces shiver’d

Fair Orithea, whom he swore he lov'd.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have prov'd
Dangers unurg'd : Feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one with th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy ; nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind ; be not strange
To thyself only. All will spy in thy face
A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.
Richly cloth'd apes are called apes, and as soon
Eclips'd as bright we call the moon the moon.
Men of France, changeable cameleons,
Spitals of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee. . . . O stay here! for thee
England is only a worthy gallery,
To walk in expectation ; till from thence
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dream me some happiness,
Nor let thy looks our long hid love confess,
Nor praise, nor dispraise me ; nor bless, nor curse
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight startings, crying out, Oh, oh,
Nurse, oh, my love is slain, I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone ; I saw him, I,
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love."

Some one then inquired of Lamb if we could not see from the window the Temple walk in which Chaucer used to take his exercise ; and

on his name being put to the vote, I was pleased to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all but A—, who said something about the ruggedness of the metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography. I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing every thing to its own trite level, and asked “if he did not think it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English literature; to see the head, round which the visions of fancy must have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to watch those lips that ‘lisped in numbers, for the numbers came’—as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving to advance it; a pleasant humourist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as Mine Host of the Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have seen Chaucer in company with the author of the ‘Decameron,’ and

have heard them exchange their best stories together,—the Squire's Tale against the Story of the Falcon, the Wife of Bath's Prologue against the Adventures of Friar Albert. How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, relieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, and by the courtesies of genius! Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning, these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features, as different from the moderns as their books, and well worth the perusal. Dante," I continued, "is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by no less a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with 'the mighty dead,' and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic." Lamb put it to me if I should like to see Spenser as well as Chaucer; and I answered without hesitation, "No; for that his beauties were ideal, visionary,

not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing in the individual might dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to our apprehensions) rather 'a creature of the element, that lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds,' than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound—

— ' *That was Arion crown'd :*
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain ! ' "

Captain Burney muttered something about Columbus, and Martin Burney hinted at the Wandering Jew; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

"I should like," said Mrs Reynolds, "to have seen Pope talking with Patty Blount; and I *have* seen Goldsmith." Every one turned round to look at Mrs Reynolds, as if by so doing they too could get a sight of Goldsmith.

“Where,” asked a harsh croaking voice, “was Dr Johnson in the years 1745-6? He did not write any thing that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell many years after ‘with lack-lustre eye,’ yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him; and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful Majesty of Britain, and penning the Proclamation to all true subjects and adherents of the legitimate Government.”

“I thought,” said A—, turning short round upon Lamb, “that you of the Lake School did not like Pope?”—“Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!”—“Why certainly, the ‘Essay on Man’ must be allowed to be a masterpiece.”—“It may be so, but I seldom look into it.”—“Oh! then it’s his Satires you admire?”—“No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his compliments.”—“Compliments! I did not know he ever made any.”—“The finest,” said Lamb, “that were ever paid by the wit of

man. Each of them is worth an estate for life—nay, is an immortality. There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury :

‘ Despise low joys, low gains ;
 Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains ;
 Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains.’

Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise ? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved), when, speaking of the House of Lords, he adds—

‘ Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,
 (More silent far) where kings and poets lie ;
 Where Murray (long enough his country’s pride)
 Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde!’

And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke—

‘ Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,
 Oh ! all-accomplish’d St John, deck thy shrine?’

Or turn,” continued Lamb, with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening, “ to his list of early friends :

‘ But why then publish ? Granville the polite,
 And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write ;
 Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
 And Congreve loved and Swift endured my lays :
 The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
 Ev’n mitred Rochester would nod the head ;

And St John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
 Received with open arms one poet more.
 Happy my studies, if by these approved !
 Happier their author, if by these beloved !
 From these the world will judge of men and books,
 Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks.'"

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, "Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?"

"What say you to Dryden?"—"He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of Fame, a coffee-house, so as in some measure to vulgarize one's idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau ideal* of what a poet's life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realized in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his

death. Read Gay's verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall stairs."—"Still," said Mrs Reynolds, "I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!"

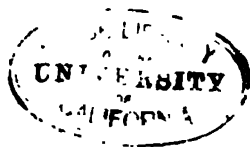
Erasmus Phillips, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to Martin Burney to ask if Junius would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. "Yes," said Lamb, "provided he would agree to lay aside his mask."

We were now at a stand for a short time, when Fielding was mentioned as a candidate: only one, however, seconded the proposition. "Richardson?"—"By all means, but only to look at him through the glass-door of his backshop, hard at work upon one his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works), but not to let him come behind his counter lest he should want you to turn customer, nor to go upstairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of Sir Charles Grandison, which was originally written in eight-and-twenty

volumes octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that Joseph Andrews was low."

There was but one statesman in the whole of English history that any one expressed the least desire to see—Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy;—and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, "nigh-sphered in Heaven," a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer.

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by Baron Field. He presently superseded both Hogarth and Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and the farce, 'Lear' and 'Wildair' and 'Abel Drugger.' What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him—the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter and Weston, and Mrs Clive and Mrs



Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young! This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably after all little better than a Bartlemy-fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked-hat. For one, I should like to have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if any one was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in 'Hamlet,' he did not drop the sword, as most actors do, behind the scenes, but kept the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment. Once at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till

they were drawn to the window by the convulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstasy of delight to see Garrick mimicing a turkey-cock in the court-yard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride. Of our party only two persons present had seen the British Roscius; and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation, by a grumbler in a corner, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakspeare. Lamb said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of 'Mustapha and Alaham;' and out of caprice insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild hair-brained enthusiast Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Decker, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong

author on their joint productions. Lord Brook, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or in Cowley's words, was "a vast species alone." Some one hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled Lamb, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakspeare, who was not present to defend himself. "If he grows disagreeable," it was whispered aloud, "there is Godwin can match him." At length, his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was mentioned, and turned the scale in his favour.

Lamb inquired if there was any one that was hanged that I would choose to mention? And I answered, Eugene Aram.* The name of the "Admirable Crichton" was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who declared himself descended from that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the

* See 'Newgate Calendar' for 1758.

initials A. C. — *Admirable Crichton!* Hunt laughed or rather roared as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

The last-named Mitre-courtier * then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell? I replied, there were only six in modern times deserving the name—Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz; and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusetts man. † As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a tittle in any of their writings, that was not to be found literally in the authors I had mentioned. [Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in under the head of Grammar, was still living.]

* Lamb at this time occupied chambers in Mitre court, Fleet street.

† Lord Bacon is not included in this list, nor do I know where he should come in. It is not easy to make room for him and his reputation together. This great and celebrated man in some of his works recommends it to pour a bottle of claret into the ground of a morning, and to stand over it, inhaling the perfumes. So he sometimes enriched the dry and barren soil of speculation with the fine aromatic spirit of his genius. His 'Essays' and his 'Advancement of Learning' are works of vast depth and scope of observation. The last, though it contains no positive discoveries, is a noble chart of the human intellect, and a guide to all future inquirers.

None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the re-appearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for their present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As A— with an uneasy fidgetty face was about to put some question about Mr Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was prevented by Martin Burney who observed, “If J— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted scholiasts, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.” I said this might be fair enough in him who had read or fancied he had read the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up these authors to give an account of themselves in person, till we had looked into their writings.

By this time it should seem that some rumour of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritable genus* in their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked: Gay offered to come and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly: Steele and Addison left

their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley: Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly: Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare: Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again—and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his lifetime been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an exciseman of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative—the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it seemed that all at once they glided from their frames, and seated themselves at some little distance from us. There was Leonardo with his majestic beard and watchful eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him; next him was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the Fornarina; and on

his other side was Lucretia Borgia, with calm, golden locks; Michael Angelo had placed the model of St Peter's on the table before him; Correggio had an angel at his side; Titian was seated with his Mistress between himself and Giorgioni; Guido was accompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box from him; Claude held a mirror in his hand; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on the head; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rembrandt was hid under furs, gold chains, and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being *bond-fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest desire to see their illustrious successors—

“Whose names on earth

In Fame's eternal records live for aye!”

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and mournfully withdrew. “Egad!” said Lamb, “those are the very fellows

I should like to have had some talk with, to know how they could see to paint when all was dark around them?"

"But shall we have nothing to say," interrogated G. J—, "to the Legend of Good Women?" —"Name, name, Mr J—," cried Hunt in a boisterous tone of friendly exultation, "name as many as you please, without reserve or fear of molestation!" J— was perplexed between so many amiable recollections, that the name of the lady of his choice expired in a pensive whiff of his pipe; and Lamb impatiently declared for the Duchess of Newcastle. Mrs Hutchinson was no sooner mentioned, than she carried the day from the Duchess. We were the less solicitous on this subject of filling up the posthumous lists of Good Women, as there was already one in the room as good, as sensible, and in all respects as exemplary, as the best of them could be for their lives! "I should like vastly to have seen Ninon de l'Enclos," said that incomparable person; and this immediately put us in mind that we had neglected to pay honour due to our friends on the other side of the Channel: Voltaire, the patriarch of levity, and Rousseau, the father of sentiment, Montaigne and Rabelais (great in wisdom and in wit), Molière and that illustrious group that are collected round him (in the print

of that subject) to hear him read his comedy of the 'Tartuffe' at the house of Ninon; Racine, La Fontaine, Rochefoucault, St Evremont, &c.

"There is one person," said a shrill, querulous voice, "I would rather see than all these—Don Quixote!"

"Come, come!" said Hunt; "I thought we should have no heroes, real or fabulous. What say you, Mr Lamb? Are you for eking out your shadowy list with such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghengis Khan?"—"Excuse me," said Lamb; "on the subject of characters in active life, plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve."—"No, no! come, out with your worthies!"—"What do you think of Guy Fawkes and Judas Iscariot?" Hunt turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. "Your most exquisite reason!" was echoed on all sides; and A—thought that Lamb had now fairly entangled himself. "Why, I cannot but think," retorted he of the wistful countenance, "that Guy Fawkes, that poor, fluttering annual scare-crow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the mo-

ment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion ; but if I say any more, there is that fellow Godwin will make something of it. And as to Judas Iscariot, my reason is different. I would fain see the face of him, who, having dipped his hand in the same dish with the Son of Man, could afterwards betray him. I have no conception of such a thing ; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it."—"You have said enough, Mr Lamb to justify your choice."

"Oh! ever right, Menenius,—ever right!"

"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," continued Lamb ; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. "If Shakspeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him ; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!"

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke with that dim, dubious light by which Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works ; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night,

and the night after that, till that night over-
spread Europe which saw no dawn. The same
event, in truth, broke up our little Congress that
broke up the great one. But that was to meet
again: our deliberations have never been re-
sumed.

ESSAY XIX.

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS.

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My father was a Dissenting Minister, at Wem, in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose that date are to me like the "dreaded name of Demogorgon") Mr Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian Congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr Rowe, who himself went down to the coach in a state of anxiety and expectation to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man, in a short black coat (like a shooting jacket) which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the sub-

ject by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he stayed; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there, "fluttering the *proud Salopians*, like an eagle in a dove-cote;" and the Welsh mountains, that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of

"High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay!"

As we passed along between Wem and Shrewsbury, and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches, or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the road side, a sound was in my ears as of a Siren's song; I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting from the deadly bands that "bound them,

"With Styx nine times round them,"

my ideas float on winged words, and as they

expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; my heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr Rowe, and with Mr Jenkins of Whitchurch (nine miles farther on), according to the custom of Dissenting Ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over and see my father, according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr Rowe's probable successor; but, in the mean time, I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a

Unitarian pulpit to preach the gospel, was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January 1798, that I rose one morning before day-light, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798.—*Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dusse-je vivre des siècles entiers, le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renaître pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire.* When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th psalm, and when it was done, Mr Coleridge rose and gave out his text; "And he went up into the mountain to pray; HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St John came into my mind, "of one crying in the wilderness, who

had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey." The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had "inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion,—and to show the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, "as though he should never be old," and the same poor country-lad, crimped, kidnapped, brought into town, made drunk at an alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood.

"Such were the notes our once-loved poet sung."

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together, Truth and Genius had embraced,

under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the *good cause*; and the cold dank drops of dew, that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned every thing into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of *JUS DIVINUM* on it:

“Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.”

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. “For those two hours,” he afterwards was pleased to say, “he was conversing with William Hazlitt’s forehead!” His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His

complexion was at that time clear, and even bright—

“As are the children of yon azure sheen.”

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. “A certain tender bloom his face o’erspread,” a purple tinge as we see it in the pale thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a scallop, without oars or compass. So at least I comment on it after the event. Coleridge, in his person, was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, “somewhat fat and porsy.” His hair (now, alas! grey) was then

black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward; and is traditionally inseparable (though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach *Christ crucified*, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years. He had been a poor Irish lad, carefully brought up by his parents, and sent to the University of Glasgow (where he studied under Adam Smith) to prepare him for his future destination. It was his mother's proudest wish to see her son a Dissenting Minister. So, if we look back to past generations (as far as eye can reach), we see the same hopes, fears, wishes, followed by the same disappointments, throbbing in the human heart; and so we may see them (if we look forward) rising up for ever, and disappearing, like vapourish bubbles, in the human breast! After being tossed about from congregation to congregation in the heats of the Unitarian controversy, and squabbles about the American war, he had been relegated

to an obscure village, where he was to spend the last thirty years of his life, far from the only converse that he loved, the talk about disputed texts of Scripture, and the cause of civil and religious liberty. Here he passed his days, repining, but resigned, in the study of the Bible, and the perusal of the Commentators,—huge folios, not easily got through, one of which would outlast a winter! Why did he pore on these from morn to night (with the exception of a walk in the fields or a turn in the garden to gather broccoli-plants or kidney beans of his own rearing, with no small degree of pride and pleasure)?—Here were “no figures nor no fantasies,”—neither poetry nor philosophy—nothing to dazzle, nothing to excite modern curiosity; but to his lack-lustre eyes there appeared, within the pages of the ponderous, unwieldy, neglected tomes, the sacred name of JEHOVAH in Hebrew capitals: pressed down by the weight of the style, worn to the last fading thinness of the understanding, there were glimpses, glimmering notions of the patriarchal wanderings, with palm-trees hovering in the horizon, and processions of camels at the distance of three thousand years; there was Moses with the Burning Bush, the number of the Twelve Tribes, types, shadows, glosses on

the law and the prophets; there were discussions (dull enough) on the age of Methuselah, a mighty speculation! there were outlines, rude guesses at the shape of Noah's Ark and of the riches of Solomon's Temple; questions as to the date of the creation, predictions of the end of all things; the great lapses of time, the strange mutations of the globe were unfolded with the voluminous leaf, as it turned over; and though the soul might slumber with an hieroglyphic veil of inscrutable mysteries drawn over it, yet it was in a slumber ill-exchanged for all the sharpened realities of sense, wit, fancy, or reason. My father's life was comparatively a dream; but it was a dream of infinity and eternity, of death, the resurrection, and a judgment to come!

No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript: yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased, if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings; and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue; and a smile of

delight beamed across his rugged cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy!* Besides, Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his 'Vindiciæ Galliciæ' as a capital performance) as a clever scholastic man—a master of the topics,—or as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetorician, who had only an eye to common-places. On this I ven-

* My father was one of those who mistook his talent after all. He used to be very much dissatisfied that I preferred his Letters to his Sermons. The last were forced and dry; the first came naturally from him. For ease, half-plays on words, and a supine, monkish, indolent pleasantry, I have never seen them equalled.

tured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them—"He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!" Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him—"If there had been a man of genius in the room, he would have settled the question in five minutes." He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that "this was only one instance of the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect." He did not rate Godwin very

high* (this was caprice or prejudice, real or affected) but he had a great idea of Mrs Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation; none at all of her talent for book-making. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck *with* him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck *by* him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of every the commonest word, exclaiming, "What do you mean by a *sensation*, Sir? What do you mean by an *idea*?" This, Coleridge said, was barricadoing the road to truth;—it was setting up a turnpike-gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of 150*l.* a-year if he chose to wave his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Cole-

* He complained in particular of the presumption of his attempting to establish the future immortality of man, "without" (as he said) "knowing what Death was or what Life was"—and the tone in which he pronounced these two words seemed to convey a complete image of both.

ridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles' distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr Wedgwood's bounty. I was presently relieved from this dilemma; for Mr Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, *Mr Coleridge, Nether-Stowey, Somersetshire*; and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in Cassandra) when he sees a thunder-bolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet-

preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going

——“Sounding on his way.”

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. He told me in confidence (going along) that he should have preached two sermons before he accepted the situation at Shrewsbury, one on Infant Baptism, the other on the Lord's Supper, shewing that he could not administer either, which would have effectually disqualified him for the object in view. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the foot-path to the other. This struck me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line. He spoke slightingly of Hume (whose 'Essay on Miracles' he said was stolen from an objection started in one of South's sermons—*Credat Judæus Apella!*) I was not very much pleased at this account of Hume, for I had just been reading, with infinite relish, that com-

pletest of all metaphysical *choke-pears*, his 'Treatise on Human Nature,' to which the 'Essays,' in point of scholastic subtilty and close reasoning, are mere elegant trifling, light summer reading. Coleridge even denied the excellence of Hume's general style, which I think betrayed a want of taste or candour. He however made me amends by the manner in which he spoke of Berkeley. He dwelt particularly on his 'Essay on Vision' as a masterpiece of analytical reasoning. So it undoubtedly is. He was exceedingly angry with Dr Johnson for striking the stone with his foot, in allusion to this author's Theory of Matter and Spirit, and saying, "Thus I confute him, Sir." Coleridge drew a parallel (I don't know how he brought about the connexion) between Bishop Berkeley and Tom Paine. He said the one was an instance of a subtle, the other of an acute mind, than which no two things could be more distinct. The one was a shop-boy's quality, the other the characteristic of a philosopher. He considered Bishop Butler as a true philosopher, a profound and conscientious thinker, a genuine reader of nature and of his own mind. He did not speak of his 'Analogy,' but of his 'Sermons at the Rolls' Chapel,' of which I had never heard. Coleridge somehow always contrived to prefer

the *unknown* to the *known*. In this instance he was right. The 'Analogy' is a tissue of sophistry, of wire-drawn, theological special-pleading; the 'Sermons' (with the Preface to them) are in a fine vein of deep, matured reflection, a candid appeal to our observation of human nature, without pedantry and without bias. I told Coleridge I had written a few remarks, and was sometimes foolish enough to believe that I had made a discovery on the same subject (the 'Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind')—and I tried to explain my view of it to Coleridge, who listened with great willingness, but I did not succeed in making myself understood. I sat down to the task shortly afterwards for the twentieth time, got new pens and paper, determined to make clear work of it, wrote a few meagre sentences in the skeleton-style of a mathematical demonstration, stopped half-way down the second page; and, after trying in vain to pump up any words, images, notions, apprehensions, facts, or observations, from that gulph of abstraction in which I had plunged myself for four or five years preceding, gave up the attempt as labour in vain, and shed tears of helpless despondency on the blank unfinished paper. I can write fast enough now: Am I better than I was then? Oh no! One truth discovered, one pang of regret at not

being able to express it, is better than all the fluency and flippancy in the world. Would that I could go back to what I then was! Why can we not revive past times as we can revisit old places? If I had the quaint Muse of Sir Philip Sidney to assist me, I would write a *Sonnet to the Road between Wem and Shrewsbury*, and immortalise every step of it by some fond enigmatical conceit. I would swear that the very milestones had ears, and that Harmer-hill stooped with all its pines, to listen to a poet, as he passed! I remember but one other topic of discourse in this walk. He mentioned Paley, praised the naturalness and clearness of his style, but condemned his sentiments, thought him a mere time-serving casuist, and said that "the fact of his work on Moral and Political Philosophy being made a text-book in our Universities was a disgrace to the national character." We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward, pensive but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person, whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me. "Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard." He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his

powers of conversation, and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with any thing at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three-hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr Southey's 'Vision of Judgment,' and also from that other 'Vision of Judgment,' which Mr Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge street Junto, took into his especial keeping!

On my way back, I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy: I had a light before me—it was the face of Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge in truth met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been

won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sun-sets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. *I was to visit Coleridge in the Spring.* This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased my ardour. In the mean time, I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England, in his fine 'Ode on the Departing Year,' and I applied it, *con amore*, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptised in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart and untried feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester,

and by Upton, where I thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury) where I sat up all night to read 'Paul and Virginia.' Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read! I recollect a remark of Coleridge's upon this very book,—that nothing could show the gross indelicacy of French manners and the entire-corruption of their imagination more strongly than the behaviour of the heroine in the last fatal scene, who turns away from a person on board the sinking vessel, that offers to save her life, because he has thrown off his clothes to assist him, in swimming. Was this a time to think of such a circumstance? I once hinted to Wordsworth, as we were sailing in his boat on Grasmere lake, that I thought he had borrowed the idea of his 'Poems on the Naming of Places' from the local inscriptions of the same kind in 'Paul and Virginia.' He did not own the obligation, and stated some distinction without a difference, in defence of his claim to originality. Any the slightest variation would be sufficient for this purpose in his mind; for whatever *he* added or altered would inevitably be worth all that any

one else had done, and contain the marrow of the sentiment.—I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater, and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn, and read ‘Camilla.’ So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that, have wanted every thing!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet’s, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath

“the scales that fence” our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother’s poems, the ‘Lyrical Ballads,’ which were still in manuscript, or in the form of ‘Sybilline Leaves.’ I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I and II, and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

——“hear the loud stag speak.”

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. As in our dreams the fulness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight

of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in *lamb's-wool*, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what *has been!*

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of 'Betty Foy.' I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the 'Thorn,' the 'Mad Mother,' and the 'Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman,' I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

"In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,"

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the

fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of
Spring,

“ While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.”

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey
that evening, and his voice sounded high

“ Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,”

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-fact-ness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at

Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own 'Peter Bell.' There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantry's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and

said triumphantly that "his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life." He had been to see the 'Castle Spéctre' by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove." This *ad captandum* merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "With what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr Wordsworth for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air; and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, "his face was as a book where men might read strange matters," and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge

and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm-trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *sip*. It was agreed, among other things, that we

should make a jaunt down the Bristol-Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chace, like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound, that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion, that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way: yet of the three, had I to choose during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantian philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete; Sir Walter Scott's, or Mr Blackwood's, when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed

Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as *embrowned* and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gaspar Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march—(our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue)—through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Linton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We however knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs. The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the sea-side, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship

in the 'Ancient Mariner.' At Linton the character of the sea-coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the *Valley of Rocks* (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it) bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the *Giant's Causeway*. A thunder-storm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the *Valley of Rocks*, but as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the 'Death of Abel,' but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour, on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it.

On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's 'Georgics,' but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the 'Seasons,' lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "*That is true fame!*" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the 'Lyrical Ballads' were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakspeare and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakspeare seemed to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster." He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like

the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these couplet-writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages." He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He however thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of 'Caleb Williams.'* In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed sea-sands," in such talk as this a whole morning, and I recollect met with a curious sea-weed,

* He had no idea of pictures, of Claude or Raphael, and at this time I had as little as he. He sometimes gives a striking account at present of the Cartoons at Pisa, by Buffamalco and others; of one in particular, where Death is seen in the air brandishing his scythe, and the great and mighty of the earth shudder at his approach, while the beggars and the wretched kneel to him as their deliverer. He would of course understand so broad and fine a moral as this at any time.

of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a *nature* towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that *likeness* was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new), but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious) and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest any thing to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage-smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey, we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared any thing for the occasion? He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him,—this was a fault,—but we met in the evening at Bridgewater. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines from his tragedy of 'Remorse;' which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards,—

“ Oh memory ! shield me from the world's poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life.”

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a

common-place book under his arm, and the first with a *bon-mot* in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—*Man as he was, or man as he is to be*. "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is *not* to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. — Enough of this for the present.

· "But there is matter for another rhyme,
And I to this may add a second tale."

ESSAY XX.

THE SHYNESS OF SCHOLARS.

ESSAY XX.

THE SHYNESS OF SCHOLARS.

“ And of his port as meek as is a maid.”

SCHOLARS lead a contemplative and retired life, both which circumstances must be supposed to contribute to the effect in question. A life of study is also conversant with high and *ideal* models, which gives an ambitious turn to the mind; and pride is nearly akin to delicacy of feeling.

That a life of privacy and obscurity should render its votaries bashful and awkward, or unfit them for the routine of society, from the want both of a habit of going into company and from ignorance of its usages, is obvious to remark. No one can be expected to do that well or without a certain degree of hesitation and restraint, which he is not accustomed to do except on particular occasions, and at rare intervals. You might as rationally set a scholar or a clown on a tight-rope and expect them to dance gracefully

and with every appearance of ease, as introduce either into the gay, laughing circle, and suppose that he will acquit himself handsomely and come off with applause in the retailing of anecdote or the interchange of repartee. "If you have not seen the Court, your manners must be naught; and if your manners are naught, you must be damned," according to Touchstone's reasoning. The other cause lies rather deeper, and is so far better worth considering, perhaps. A student, then, that is, a man who condemns himself to toil for a length of time and through a number of volumes in order to arrive at a conclusion, naturally loses that smartness and ease which distinguish the gay and thoughtless rattler. There is a certain elasticity of movement and hey-day of the animal spirits seldom to be met with but in those who have never cared for any thing beyond the moment, or looked lower than the surface. The scholar having to encounter doubts and difficulties on all hands, and indeed to apply by way of preference to those subjects which are most beset with mystery, becomes hesitating, sceptical, irresolute, absent, dull. All the processes of his mind are slow, cautious, circuitous, instead of being prompt, heedless, straightforward. Finding the intricacies of the path increase upon him

in every direction, this can hardly be supposed to add to the lightness of his step, the confidence of his brow as he advances. He does not skim the surface, but dives under it like the mole to make his way darkling, by imperceptible degrees, and throwing up heaps of dirt and rubbish over his head to track his progress. He is therefore startled at any sudden light, puzzled by any casual question, taken unawares and at a disadvantage in every critical emergency. He must have time given him to collect his thoughts, to consider objections, to make farther inquiries, and come to no conclusion at last. This is very different from the dashing, *off-hand* manner of the mere man of business or fashion; and he who is repeatedly found in situations to which he is unequal (particularly if he is of a reflecting and candid temper) will be apt to look foolish, and to lose both his countenance and his confidence in himself—at least as to the opinion others entertain of him, and the figure he is likely on any occasion to make in the eyes of the world. The course of his studies has not made him wise, but has taught him the uncertainty of wisdom; and has supplied him with excellent reasons for suspending his judgment, when another would throw the casting-weight

of his own presumption or interest into the scale.

The inquirer after truth learns to take nothing for granted ; least of all, to make an assumption of his own superior merits. He would have nothing proceed without proper proofs and an exact scrutiny ; and would neither be imposed upon himself, nor impose upon others by shallow and hasty appearances. It takes years of patient toil and devoted enthusiasm to master any art or science ; and after all, the success is doubtful. He infers that other triumphs must be prepared in like manner at an humble distance : he cannot bring himself to imagine that any object worth seizing on or deserving of regard, can be carried by a *coup de main*. So far from being proud or puffed up by them, he would be ashamed and degraded in his own opinion by any advantages that were to be obtained by such cheap and vulgar means as putting a good face on the matter, as strutting and vapouring about his own pretensions. He would not place himself on a level with bullies or coxcombs ; nor believe that those whose favour he covets, can be the dupes of either. Whatever is excellent in his fanciful creed is hard of attainment ; and he would (perhaps

absurdly enough) have the means in all cases answerable to the end. He knows that there are difficulties in his favourite pursuits to puzzle the will, to tire the patience, to unbrace the strongest nerves, and make the stoutest courage quail; and he would fain think that if there is any object more worthy than another to call forth the earnest solicitude, the hopes and fears of a wise man, and to make his heart yearn within him at the most distant prospect of success, this precious prize in the grand lottery of life is not to be had for the asking for, or from the mere easy indifference or overbearing effrontery with which you put in your claim. He is aware that it will be long enough before any one paints a fine picture by walking up and down and admiring himself in the glass; or writes a fine poem by being delighted with the sound of his own voice; or solves a single problem in philosophy by swaggering and haughty airs. He conceives that it is the same with the way of the world—woos the fair as he woos the Muse; in conversation never puts in a word till he has something better to say than any one else in the room; in business never strikes while the iron is hot, and flings away all his advantages by endeavouring to prove to his own and the satisfaction of others, that he is clearly

entitled to them. It never once enters into his head (till it is too late) that impudence is the current coin in the affairs of life; that he who doubts his own merit, never has credit given him by others; that Fortune does not stay to have her overtures canvassed; that he who neglects opportunity, can seldom command it a second time; that the world judge by appearances, not by realities; and that they sympathise more readily with those who are prompt to do themselves justice, and to show off their various qualifications or enforce their pretensions to the utmost, than with those who wait for others to award their claims, and carry their fastidious refinement into helplessness and imbecility. Thus "fools rush in where angels fear to tread;" and modest merit finds to its cost, that the bold hand and dauntless brow succeed where timidity and bashfulness are pushed aside; that the gay, laughing eye is preferred to dejection and gloom, health and animal spirits to the shattered, sickly frame and trembling nerves; and that to succeed in life, a man should carry about with him the outward and incontrovertible signs of success, and of his satisfaction with himself and his prospects, instead of plaguing every body near him with fantastical scruples and his ridiculous anxiety to realise an unattainable standard

of perfection. From holding back himself, the speculative enthusiast is thrust back by others : his pretensions are insulted and trampled on ; and the repeated and pointed repulses he meets with, make him still more unwilling to encounter, and more unable to contend with those that await him in the prosecution of his career. He therefore retires from the contest altogether, or remains in the back-ground, a passive but uneasy spectator of a scene, in which he finds from experience, that confidence, alertness, and superficial acquirements are of more avail than all the refinement and delicacy in the world. Action, in truth, is referable chiefly to quickness and strength of resolution, rather than to depth of reasoning or scrupulous nicety : again, it is to be presumed that those who show a proper reliance on themselves, will not betray the trust we place in them through pusillanimity or want of spirit : in what relates to the opinion of others, which is often formed hastily and on slight acquaintance, much must be allowed to what strikes the senses, to what excites the imagination ; and in all popular worldly schemes, popular and worldly means must be resorted to, instead of depending wholly on the hidden and intrinsic merits of the case.

“ In peace, there’s nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness, and humility :
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tyger ;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour’d rage :
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect ;
Let it pry through the portage of the head,
Like the brass cannon ; let the brow o’erwhelm it,
As fearfully as doth a galled rock
O’erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill’d with the wild and wasteful ocean.”

This advice (sensible as it is) is abhorrent to the nature of a man who is accustomed to place all his hopes of victory in reasoning and reflection only. The noisy, rude, gratuitous success of those who have taken so much less pains to deserve it, disgusts and disheartens him—he loses his self-possession and self-esteem, has no standard left by which to measure himself or others, and as he cannot be brought to admire them, persuades himself at last that the blame rests with himself; and instead of bespeaking a fashionable dress, learning to bow, or taking a few lessons in boxing or fencing to brace his nerves and raise his spirits, aggravates all his former faults by way of repairing them, grows more jealous of the propriety of every word and look, lowers his voice into a whisper, gives his

style the last polish, reconsiders his arguments, refines his sentiments till they evaporate in a sigh, and thus satisfies himself that he can hardly fail; that men judge impartially in the end, that the public will sooner or later do him justice, Fortune smile, and the Fair no longer be averse! *Oh malore!* He is just where he was, or ten times worse off than ever.

There is another circumstance that tends not a little to perplex the judgment, and add to the difficulties of the retired student, when he comes out into the world. He is like one dropped from the clouds. He has hitherto conversed chiefly with historic personages and abstract propositions, and has no just notion of actual men and things. He does not well know how to reconcile the sweeping conclusions he has been taught to indulge in to the cautious and pliant maxims of the world, nor how to compare himself, an inhabitant of Utopia, with sublunary mortals. He has been habituated all his life to look up to a few great names handed down by virtue or science as the "Gods of his idolatry," as the fixed stars in the firmament of reputation, and to have some respect for himself and other learned men as votaries at the shrine and as appreciating the merits of their idol; but all the rest of the world, who are neither the objects of

this sort of homage, nor concerned as a sort of priesthood in collecting and paying it, he looks upon as actually nobody, or as worms crawling upon the face of the earth without intellectual value or pretensions. He is, therefore, a little surprised and shocked to find, when he deigns to mingle with his fellows, those every-day mortals, on ordinary terms, that they are of a height nearly equal to himself, that they have words, ideas, feelings in common with the best, and are not the mere cyphers he had been led to consider them. From having under-rated, he comes to over-rate them. Having dreamt of no such thing, he is more struck with what he finds than perhaps it deserves; magnifies the least glimpse of sense or humour into sterling wit or wisdom; is startled by any objection from so unexpected a quarter; thinks his own advantages of no avail, because they are not the only ones, and shrinks from an encounter with weapons he has not been used to, and from a struggle by which he feels himself degraded. The Knight of La Mancha when soundly beaten by the packstaves of the Yanguesian carriers, laid all the blame on his having condescended to fight with plebeians. The pride of learning comes in to aid the awkwardness and bashfulness of the inexperienced novice, converting his want

of success into the shame and mortification of defeat in what he habitually considers as a contest with inferiors. Indeed, those will always be found to submit with the worst grace to any check or reverse of this kind in common conversation or reasoning, who have been taught to set the most exclusive and disproportioned value on letters: and the most enlightened and accomplished scholars will be less likely to be humbled or put to the blush by the display of common sense or native talent, than the more ignorant, self-sufficient, and pedantic among the learned; for that ignorance, self-sufficiency, and pedantry, are sometimes to be reckoned among the attributes of learning, cannot be disputed. These qualities are not very reconcilable with modest merit; but they are quite consistent with a great deal of blundering, confusion, and want of *tact* in the commerce of the world. The genuine scholar retires from an unequal conflict into silence and obscurity: the pedant swells into self-importance, and renders himself conspicuous by pompous arrogance and absurdity!

It is hard upon those who have ever taken pains or done any thing to distinguish themselves, that they are seldom the trumpeters of their own achievements; and I believe it may be laid down as a rule, that we receive just as

much homage from others as we exact from them by our own declarations, looks, and manner. But no one who has performed any thing great looks big upon it: those who have any thing to boast of are generally silent on that head, and altogether shy of the subject. With Coriolanus, they "will not have their nothings monster'd." From familiarity, his own acquirements do not appear so extraordinary to the individual as to others; and there is a natural want of sympathy in this respect. No one who is really capable of great things is proud or vain of his success; for he thinks more of what he had hoped or has failed to do, than of what he has done. A habit of extreme exertion, or of anxious suspense, is not one of buoyant, overweening self-complacency: those who have all their lives tasked their faculties to the utmost, may be supposed to have quite enough to do without having much disposition left to anticipate their success with confidence, or to glory in it afterwards. The labours of the mind, like the drudgery of the body, depress and take away the usual alacrity of the spirits. Nor can such persons be lifted up with the event; for the impression of the consequences to result from any arduous undertaking must be light and vain, compared with the toil and anxiety accompany-

ing it. It is only those who have done nothing, who fancy they can do every thing; or who have leisure and inclination to admire themselves. To sit before a glass and smile delighted at our own image, is merely a tax on our egotism and self-conceit; and these are resources not easily exhausted in some persons; or if they are, the deficiency is supplied by flatterers who surround the vain, like a natural atmosphere. Fools who take all their opinions at second-hand cannot resist the coxcomb's delight in himself; or it might be said that folly is the natural mirror of vanity. The greatest heroes, it has often been observed, do not show it in their faces; nor do philosophers affect to be thought wise. Little minds triumph on small occasions, or over puny competitors: the loftiest wish for higher opportunities of signalising themselves, or compare themselves with those models that leave them no room for flippanant exultation. Either great things are accomplished with labour and pains, which stamp their impression on the general character and tone of feeling; or if this should not be the case (as sometimes happens), and they are the effect of genius and a happiness of nature, then they cost too little to be much thought of, and we rather wonder at others for admiring them, than at ourselves for

having performed them. “*Vix ea nostra voco*” —is the motto of spontaneous talent; and in neither case is conceit the exuberant growth of great original power or of great attainments.

In one particular, the uneducated man carries it hollow against the man of thought and refinement: the first can shoot in the *long bow*, which the last cannot for the life of him. He who has spent the best part of his time and wasted his best powers in endeavouring to answer the question—“What is truth?”—scorns a lie, and every thing making the smallest approach to one. His mind by habit has become tenacious of, devoted to the truth. The grossness and vulgarity of falsehood shock the delicacy of his perceptions, as much as it would shock the finest artist to be obliged to daub in a sign-post, or scrawl a caricature. He cannot make up his mind to derive any benefit from so pitiful and disgusting a source. Tell me that a man is a metaphysician, and at the same time that he is given to shallow and sordid boasting, and I will not believe you. After striving to raise himself to an equality with truth and nature by patient investigation and refined distinctions (which few can make)—whether he succeed or fail, he cannot stoop to acquire a spurious reputation, or to advance himself or lessen others by

paltry artifice and idle rhodomontade, which are in every one's power who has never known the value or undergone the labour of discovering a single truth. Gross personal and local interests bear the principal sway with the ignorant or mere man of the world, who considers not what things are in themselves, but what they are to him: the man of science attaches a higher importance to, because he finds a more constant pleasure in the contemplation and pursuit of general and abstracted truths. Philosophy also teaches self-knowledge; and self-knowledge strikes equally at the root of any inordinate opinion of ourselves, or wish to impress others with idle admiration. Mathematicians have been remarked for persons of strict probity and a conscientious and somewhat literal turn of mind.* But are poets and romance-writers equally scrupulous and severe judges of themselves, and martyrs to right principle? I cannot acquit them of the charge of vanity, and a wish to aggrandise themselves in the eyes of the world, at the expense of a little false complaisance (what wonder when the world are so

* I have heard it said that carpenters, who do every thing by the square and line, are honest men, and I am willing to suppose it. Shakspeare, in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' makes Snug the Joiner the *moral* man of the piece.

prone to admire, and they are so spoiled by indulgence in self-pleasing fancies?)—but in general they are too much taken up with their *ideal* creations, which have also a truth and keeping of their own, to misrepresent or exaggerate matters of fact, or to trouble their heads about them. The poet's waking thoughts are dreams: the liar has all his wits and senses about him, and thinks only of astonishing his hearers by some worthless assertion, a mixture of impudence and cunning. But what shall we say of the clergy and the priests of all countries? Are they not men of learning? And are they not, with few exceptions, noted for imposture and time-serving, much more than for a love of truth and candour? They are good subjects, it is true; bound to keep the peace, and hired to maintain certain opinions, not to inquire into them. So this is an exception to the rule, such as might be expected. I speak of the natural tendencies of things, and not of the false bias that may be given to them by their forced combination with other principles.

The worst effect of this depression of spirits, or of the "scholar's melancholy," here spoken of, is when it leads a man, from a distrust of himself, to seek for low company, or to forget it by matching below himself. Gray is to be

pitied, whose extreme diffidence or fastidiousness was such as to prevent his associating with his fellow collegians, or mingling with the herd, till at length, like the owl, shutting himself up from society and daylight, he was hunted and hooted at like the owl whenever he chanced to appear, and was even assailed and disturbed in the haunts in which "he held his solitary reign." He was driven from college to college, and subjected to a persecution the more harassing to a person of his indolent and retired habits. But he only shrunk the more within himself in consequence—read over his favourite authors—corresponded with his distant friends—was terrified out of his wits at the bare idea of having his portrait prefixed to his works; and probably died from nervous agitation at the publicity into which his name had been forced by his learning, taste, and genius. This monastic seclusion and reserve is, however, better than a career such as Porson's; who from not liking the restraints, or not possessing the exterior recommendations of good society, addicted himself to the lowest indulgences, spent his days and nights in cider-cellars and pot-houses, cared not with whom or where he was, so that he had somebody to talk to and something to drink, "from humble porter to imperial tokay"



(*a liquid*, according to his own pun), and fell a martyr, in all likelihood, to what in the first instance was pure *mauvaise honte*. Nothing could overcome this propensity to low society and sotting, but the having something to do, which required his whole attention and faculties; and then he shut himself up for weeks together in his chambers, or at the University, to collate old manuscripts, or edite a Greek tragedy, or expose a grave pedant, without seeing a single boon-companion, or touching a glass of wine. I saw him once at the London Institution with a large patch of coarse brown paper on his nose, the skirts of his rusty black coat hung with cobwebs, and talking in a tone of suavity, approaching to condescension, to one of the managers. It is a pity that men should so lose themselves from a certain awkwardness and rusticity at the outset. But did not Sheridan make the same melancholy ending, and run the rame fatal career, though in a higher and more brilliant circle? He did; and though not from exactly the same cause (for no one could accuse Sheridan's purple nose and flashing eye of a bashfulness—"modest as morning when she coldly eyes the youthful Phœbus!")—yet it was perhaps from one nearly allied to it, namely, the want of that noble independence and confi-

dence in its own resources which should distinguish genius, and the dangerous ambition to get sponsors and vouchers for it in persons of rank and fashion. The affectation of the society of lords is as mean and low-minded as the love of that of cobblers and tapsters. It is that cobblers and tapsters may admire, that we wish to be seen in the company of *their* betters. The tone of literary patronage is better than it was a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. What dramatic author would think now of getting a lady of quality to take a box at the first night of a play to prevent its being damned by the pit? Do we not read the account of Parson Adams taking his ale in Squire Booby's kitchen with mingled incredulity and shame? At present literature has, to a considerable degree, found its level, and is hardly in danger, "deprived of its natural patrons and protectors, the great and noble, of being trodden in the mire, and trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude"—though it can never again hope, to be what learning once was in the persons of the priesthood, the lord and sovereign of principalities and powers. Fool that it was ever to forego its privileges, and loosen the strong hold it had on opinion in bigotry and superstition!

I remember hearing a lady of great sense and acuteness speak of it as a painful consequence of the natural shyness of scholars, that from the want of a certain address, or an acquaintance with the common forms of society, they despair of making themselves agreeable to women of education and a certain rank in life, and throw away their fine sentiments and romantic tenderness on chambermaids and mantua-makers. Not daring to hope for success where it would be most desirable, yet anxious to realise in some way the dream of books and of their youth, they are willing to accept a return of affection which they count upon as a tribute of gratitude in those of lower circumstances (as if gratitude were ever bought by interest) and take up with the first *Dulcinea del Toboso* that they meet with, when, would they only try the experiment, they might do much better. Perhaps so: but there is here also a mixture of pride as well as modesty. The scholar is not only apprehensive of not meeting with a return of fondness where it might be most advantageous to him; but he is afraid of subjecting his self-love to the mortification of a repulse, and to the reproach of aiming at a prize far beyond his deserts. Besides, living (as he does) in an *ideal* world, he has it in his option to clothe his Goddess

(be she who or what she may), with all the perfections his heart doats on ; and he works up a dowdy of this ambiguous description *à son gré*, as an artist does a piece of dull clay, or the poet the sketch of some unrivalled heroine. The contrast is also the greater (and not the less gratifying as being his own discovery) between his favourite figure and the back-ground of her original circumstances ; and he likes her the better, inasmuch as, like himself, she owes all to her own merit—and *his* notice !

Possibly, the best cure for this false modesty, and for the uneasiness and extravagances it occasions, would be, for the retired and abstracted student to consider that he properly belongs to another sphere of action, remote from the scenes of ordinary life, and may plead the excuse of ignorance, and the privilege granted to strangers and to those who do not speak the same language. If any one is travelling in a foreign diligence, he is not expected to shine nor to put himself forward, nor need he be out of countenance because he cannot : he has only to conform as well as he can to his new and temporary situation, and to study common propriety and simplicity of manners. Every thing has its own limits, a little centre of its

own, round which it moves ; so that our true wisdom lies in keeping to our own walk in life, however humble or obscure, and being satisfied if we can succeed in it. The best of us can do no more, and we shall only become ridiculous or unhappy by attempting it. We are ashamed, because we are at a loss in things to which we have no pretensions, and try to remedy our mistakes by committing greater. An overweening vanity or self-opinion is, in truth, often at the bottom of this weakness ; and we shall be most likely to conquer the one by eradicating the other, of restricting it within due and moderate bounds.

ESSAY XXI.

THE VATICAN.

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L. The Vatican did not quite answer your expectation?

H. To say the truth, it was not such a blow as the Louvre; but then it came after it, and what is more, at the distance of twenty years. To have made the same impression, it should have been twenty times as fine; though that was scarcely possible, since all that there is fine in the Vatican, in Italy, or in the world, was in the Louvre when I first saw it, except the frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo, which could not be transported, without taking the walls of the building across the Alps.

L. And what, may I ask, (for I am curious to hear,) did you think of these same frescoes?

H. Much the same as before I saw them. As far as I could judge, they are very like the prints. I do not think the spectator's idea of them is enhanced beyond this. The Raphaels, of which you have a distinct and admirable

view, are somewhat faded—I do not mean in colour, but the outline is injured—and the Sibyls and Prophets in the Sistine Chapel are painted on the ceiling at too great a height for the eye to distinguish the faces as accurately as one would wish. The features and expressions of the figures near the bottom of the ‘Last Judgment’ are sufficiently plain, and horrible enough they are.

L. What was your opinion of the ‘Last Judgment’ itself?

H. It is literally too big to be seen. It is like an immense field of battle, or charnel-house, strewed with carcasses and naked bodies: or it is a shambles of Art. You have huge limbs apparently torn from their bodies and stuck against the wall: anatomical dissections, backs and diaphragms, tumbling “with hideous ruin and combustion down,” neither intelligible groups, nor perspective, nor colour; you distinguish the principal figure, that of Christ, only from its standing in the centre of the picture, on a sort of island of earth, separated from the rest of the subject by an inlet of sky. The whole is a scene of enormous, ghastly confusion, in which you can only make out quantity and number, and vast, uncouth masses of bones and muscles. It has the incoherence and distortion

of a troubled dream, without the shadowiness; every thing is here corporeal and of solid dimensions.

L. But surely there must be something fine in the Sibyls and Prophets, from the copies we have of them; justifying the high encomiums of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and of so many others?

H. It appears to me that nothing can be finer as to form, attitude, and outline. The whole conception is so far inimitably noble and just; and all that is felt as wanting, is a proportionable degree of expression in the countenances, though of this I am not sure, for the height (as I said before) baffles a nice scrutiny. They looked to me unfinished, vague, and general. Like some fabulous figure from the antique, the heads were brutal, the bodies divine. Or at most, the faces were only continuations of and on a par with the physical form, large and bold, and with great breadth of drawing, but no more the seat of a vivifying spirit, or with a more powerful and marked intelligence emanating from them, than from the rest of the limbs, the hands, or even drapery. The filling up of the mind is, I suspect, wanting, the *divinæ particula auræ*: there is prodigious and mighty prominence and grandeur and simplicity in the features, but they are not surcharged with meaning,

with thought or passion, like Raphael's, "the rapt soul sitting in the eyes." On the contrary, they seem only to be half-informed, and might be almost thought asleep. They are fine moulds, and contain a capacity of expression, but are not bursting, teeming with it. The outward material shrine, or tabernacle, is unexceptionable; but there is not superadded to it a revelation of the workings of the mind within. The forms in Michael Angelo are objects to admire in themselves: those of Raphael are merely a language pointing to something beyond, and full of this ultimate import.

L. But does not the difference arise from the nature of the subjects?

H. I should think, not. Surely, a Sibyl in the height of her phrensy, or an inspired Prophet—"seer blest"—in the act of receiving or of announcing the will of the Almighty, is not a less fit subject for the most exalted and impassioned expression than an Apostle, a Pope, a Saint, or a common man. If you say that these persons are not represented in the act of inspired communication, but in their ordinary quiescent state,—granted; but such preternatural workings, as well as the character and frame of mind proper for them, must leave their shadowings and lofty traces behind them.

The face that has once held communion with the Most High, or been wrought to madness by deep thought and passion, or that inly broods over its sacred or its magic lore, must be "as a book where one may read strange matters," that cannot be opened without a correspondent awe and reverence. But here is "neither the cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night:" neither the blaze of immediate inspiration nor the hallowed radiance, the mystic gloomy light that follows it, so far as I was able to perceive. I think it idle to say that Michael Angelo painted man in the abstract, and so left expression indeterminate, when he painted prophets and other given characters in particular. He has painted them on a larger scale, and cast their limbs in a gigantic mould to give a dignity and command answering to their situations and high calling, but I do not see the same high character and intensity of thought or purpose impressed upon their countenances. Thus, nothing can be nobler or more characteristic than the figure of the prophet Jeremiah. It is not abstracted, but symbolical of the history and functions of the individual. The whole figure bends and droops under a weight of woe, like a large willow tree surcharged with showers. Yet there is no pecu-

liar expression of grief in one part more than another; the head hangs down despondingly indeed, but so do the hands, the clothes, and every other part seems to labour under and be involved in a complication of distress. Again, the prophet Ezra is represented reading, in a striking attitude of attention, and with the book held close to him as if to lose no part of its contents in empty space:—all this is finely imagined and designed, but then the book reflects back none of its pregnant, hieroglyphic meaning on the face, which, though large and stately, is an ordinary unimpassioned, and even *unideal* one. Daniel, again, is meant for a face of inward thought and musing, but it might seem as if the compression of the features were produced by external force as much as by involuntary perplexity. I might extend these remarks to this artist's other works; for instance, to the Moses, of which the form and attitude express the utmost dignity and energy of purpose, but the face wants a something of the intelligence and expansive views of the Hebrew legislator. It is cut from the same block, and by the same bold sweeping hand, as the sandals or the drapery.

L. Do you think there is any truth or value

in the distinction which assigns to Raphael the dramatic, and to Michael Angelo the epic department of the art?

H. Very little, I confess. It is so far true, that Michael Angelo painted single figures, and Raphael chiefly groups; but Michael Angelo gave life and action to his figures, though not the same expression to the face. I think this arose from two circumstances. First, from his habits as a sculptor, in which form predominates, and in which the fixed lineaments are more attended to than the passing inflections, which are neither so easily caught nor so well given in sculpture as in painting. Secondly, it strikes me that Michael Angelo, who was a strong iron-built man, sympathised more with the organic structure, with bones and muscles, than with the more subtle and sensitive workings of that fine medullary substance called the brain. He compounded man admirably of brass or clay, but did not succeed equally in breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, of thought or feeling. He has less humanity than Raphael, and I think that he is also less divine, unless it be asserted that the body is less allied to earth than the mind. Expression is, after all, the principal thing. If Michael Angelo's forms have, as I allow, an intellectual character about

them and a greatness of *gusto*, so that you would almost say "his bodies thought;" his faces, on the other hand, have a drossy and material one. For example, in the figure of Adam coming from the hand of his Creator, the composition, which goes on the idea of a being starting into life at the touch of Omnipotence, is sublime:—the figure of Adam reclined at ease with manly freedom and independence, is worthy of the original founder of our race; and the expression of the face, implying passive resignation and the first consciousness of existence, is in thorough keeping—but I see nothing in the countenance of the Deity denoting supreme might and majesty. The Eve, too, lying extended at the foot of the Forbidden Tree, has an elasticity and buoyancy about it, that seems as if it could bound up from the earth of its own accord, like a bow that has been bent. It is all life and grace. The action of the head thrown back, and the upward look, correspond to the rest. The artist was here at home. In like manner, in the allegorical figures of Night and Morn at Florence, the faces are ugly or distorted, but the contour and actions of the limbs express dignity and power, in the very highest degree. The legs of the figure of Night, in particular, are twisted into the involutions of a serpent's folds;

the neck is curved like the horse's, and is clothed with thunder.

L. What, then, is the precise difference between him and Raphael, according to your conception?

H. As far as I can explain the matter, it seems to me that Michael Angelo's forms are finer, but that Raphael's are more fraught with meaning; that the rigid outline and disposable masses in the first are more grand and imposing, but that Raphael puts a greater proportion of sentiment into his, and calls into play every faculty of mind and body of which his characters are susceptible, with greater subtilty and intensity of feeling. Dryden's lines,

“A fiery soul that working out its way
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er-inform'd the tenement of clay—”

do not exactly answer to Raphael's character, which is mild and thoughtful rather than fiery; nor is there any want either of grace or grandeur in his figures: but the passage describes the “o'er-informing” spirit that breathes through them, and the unequal struggle of the expression to vent itself by more than ordinary physical means. Raphael lived a much shorter time than Michael Angelo, who also lived long after him; and there is no comparison between the number,

the variety, or the finished elegance of their works.* Michael Angelo possibly lost himself in the material and instrumental part of art, in embodying a technical theory, or in acquiring the grammar of different branches of study, excelling in knowledge and in gravity of pretension; whereas Raphael gave himself up to the diviner or lovelier impulse that breathes its soul over the face of things, being governed by a sense of reality and of general truth. There is nothing exclusive or repulsive in Raphael; he is open to all impressions alike, and seems to identify himself with whatever he saw that arrested his attention or could interest others. Michael Angelo studied for himself, and raised objects to the standard of his conception, by a *formula* or system: Raphael invented for others, and was guided only by sympathy with them. Michael Angelo was painter, sculptor, architect; but he might be said to make of each art a shrine, in which to build up the stately and gigantic stature of his own mind:—Raphael was only a painter, but in that one art he seemed to

* The oil-pictures attributed to Michael Angelo are meagre and pitiful; such as that of the Fates at Florence. Another of Witches, at Cardinal Fesch's at Rome, is like what the late Mr Barry would have admired and imitated—dingy, coarse, and vacant.

pour out all the treasures and various excellence of nature, grandeur, and scope of design, exquisite finishing, force, grace, delicacy, the strength of man, the softness of woman, the playfulness of infancy, thought, feeling, invention, imitation, labour, ease, and every quality that can distinguish a picture, except colour. Michael Angelo, in a word, stamped his own character on his works, or recast Nature in a mould of his own, leaving out much that was excellent: Raphael received his inspiration from without, and his genius caught the lambent flame of grace, of truth, and grandeur, which are reflected in his works with a light clear, transparent and unfading.

L. Will you mention one or two things that particularly struck you?

H. There is a figure of a man leading a horse in the Attila, which I think peculiarly characteristic. It is an ordinary face and figure, in a somewhat awkward dress: but he seems as if he had literally walked into the picture at that instant; he is looking forward with a mixture of earnestness and curiosity, as if the scene were passing before him, and every part of his figure and dress is flexible and in motion, pliant to the painter's plastic touch. This figure, so unconstrained and free, animated, salient, put

me in mind, compared with the usual stiffness and shackles of the art, of chain-armour used by the knights of old instead of coat-of-mail. Raphael's fresco figures seem the least of all others taken from plaster-casts; this is more than can be said of Michael Angelo's, which might be taken from, or would serve for, very noble ones. The horses in the same picture also delight me. Though dumb, they appear as though they could speak, and were privy to the import of the scene. Their inflated nostrils and speckled skins are like a kind of proud flesh; or they are animals spiritualised. In the Miracle of Bolsano is that group of children, round-faced, smiling, with large-orbed eyes, like infancy nestling in the arms of affection; the studied elegance of the choir of tender novices, with all their sense of the godliness of their function and the beauty of holiness; and the hard, liny, individual portraits of priests and cardinals on the right hand, which have the same life, spirit, boldness and marked character, as if you could have looked in upon the assembled conclave. Neither painting nor popery ever produced any thing finer. There is the utmost hardness and materiality of outline, with a spirit of fire. The School of Athens is full of striking parts and ingenious contrasts; but I

prefer to it the Convocation of Saints, with that noble circle of Prophets and Apostles in the sky, on whose bent foreheads and downcast eyes you see written the City of the Blest, the beatific presence of the Most High and the Glory hereafter to be revealed, a solemn brightness and a fearful dream, and that scarce less inspired circle of sages canonised here on earth, poets, heroes, and philosophers, with the painter himself, entering on one side like the recording angel, smiling in youthful beauty, and scarce conscious of the scene he has embodied. If there is a failure in any of these frescoes, it is, I think, in the Parnassus, in which there is something quaint and affected. In the St Peter delivered from prison, he has burst with Rembrandt into the dark chambers of night, and thrown a glory round them. In the story of Cupid and Psyche, at the Little Farnese, he has, I think, even surpassed himself in a certain swelling and voluptuous grace, as if beauty grew and ripened under his touch, and the very genius of ancient fable hovered over his enamoured pencil.

L. I believe you when you praise, not always when you condemn. Was there any thing else that you saw to give you a higher idea of him than the specimens we have in this country?

H. Nothing superior to the Cartoons for boldness of design and execution ; but I think his best oil pictures are abroad, though I had seen most of them before in the Louvre. I had not, however, seen the Crowning of the Virgin, which is in the picture-gallery of the Vatican, and appears to me one of his very highest-wrought pictures. The Virgin in the clouds is of an admirable sedateness and dignity, and over the throng of breathing faces below there is poured a stream of joy and fervid devotion that can be compared to nothing but the golden light that evening skies pour on the edges of the surging waves. " Hope elevates, and joy brightens their every feature." The Foligno Virgin was at Paris, in which I cannot say I am quite satisfied with the Madonna ; it has rather a *precieuse* expression ; but I know not enough how to admire the innumerable heads of cherubs surrounding her, touched in with such care and delicacy, yet so scarcely to be perceptible except on close inspection, nor that figure of the winged cherub below, offering the casket, and with his round, chubby face and limbs as full of rosy health and joy, as the cup is full of the juice of the purple vine. There is another picture of his I will mention, the Leo X in the Palace Pitti, " on his front engraven thought and public care ;" and

again, that little portrait in a cap in the Louvre, muffled in thought and buried in a kind of mental *chiaro scuro*. When I think of these and so many other of his inimitable works, "scattered like stray-gifts o'er the earth," meeting our thoughts half-way, and yet carrying them farther than we should have been able of ourselves, enriching, refining, exalting all around, I am at a loss to find motives for equal admiration or gratitude in what Michael Angelo has left, though his Prophets and Sibyls on the walls of the Sistine Chapel are *thumping make-weights* thrown into the opposite scale. It is nearly impossible to weigh or measure their different merits. Perhaps Michael Angelo's works, in their vastness and unity, may give a greater blow to some imaginations and lift the mind more out of itself, though accompanied with less delight or food for reflection, resembling the rocky precipice, whose "stately height though bare" overlooks the various excellence and beauty of subjected art.

L. I do not think your premises warrant your conclusion. If what you have said of each is true, I should give the undoubted preference to Raphael as at least the greater painter, if not the greater man. I must prefer the finest face to the largest mask.

H. I wish you could see and judge for yourself.

L. I prythee do not mock me. Proceed with your account. Was there nothing else worth mentioning after Raphael and Michael Angelo?

H. So much, that it has slipped from my memory. There are the finest statues in the world there, and they are scattered and put into niches or separate little rooms for effect, and not congregated together like a meeting of the marble gods of mythology, as was the case in the Louvre. There are some of Canova's, worked up to a high pitch of perfection, which might just as well have been left alone—and there are none, I think, equal to the Elgin marbles. A bath of one of the Antonines, of solid porphyry and as large as a good-sized room, struck me as the strongest proof of ancient magnificence. The busts are innumerable, inimitable, have a breathing clearness and transparency, revive ancient history, and are very like actual English heads and characters. The inscriptions alone on fragments of antique marble would furnish years of study to the curious or learned in that way. The vases are most elegant—of proportions and materials unrivalled in taste and in value. There are some tapestry copies of the Cartoons, very glaring and un-

pleasant to look at. The room containing the coloured maps of Italy, done about three hundred years ago, is one of the longest and most striking; and the passing through it with the green hillocks, rivers and mountains on its spotty sides, is like going a delightful and various journey. You recall or anticipate the most interesting scenes and objects. Out of the windows of these long straggling galleries, you look down into a labyrinth of inner and of outer courts, or catch the Dome of St Peter's adjoining (like a huge shadow), or gaze at the distant amphitheatre of hills surrounding the Sacred City, which excite a pleasing awe, whether considered as the haunts of banditti or from a recollection of the wondrous scene, the hallowed spot, on which they have overlooked for ages, Imperial or Papal Rome, or her commonwealth, more august than either. Here also in one chamber of the Vatican is a room stuffed full of artists, copying the Transfiguration, or the St Jerome of Domenichino, spitting, shrugging, and taking snuff, admiring their own performances and sneering at those of their neighbours; and on certain days of the week the whole range of the rooms is thrown open without reserve to the entire population of Rome and its environs, priests and peasants, with heads not unlike those

that gleam from the walls, perfect in expression and in costume, and young peasant girls in clouted shoes with looks of pleasure, timidity and wonder, such as those with which Raphael himself, from the portraits of him, might be supposed to have hailed the dawn of heaven-born art. There is also (to mention small works with great) a portrait of George the Fourth in his robes (a present to his Holiness) turned into an outer room; and a tablet erected by him in St Peter's, to the memory of James III. Would you believe it? Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine, when he saw the averted looks of the good people of England as they proclaimed his Majesty James III in any of the towns through which they passed, would not have believed it. Fergus Mac Ivor, when in answer to the cryer of the court, who repeated "Long live King George!" he retorted, "Long live King James!" would not have believed it possible!

L. Hang your politics.

H. Never mind, if they do not hang me.

ESSAY XXI.

ON THE SPIRIT OF MONARCHY.

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ON THE SPIRIT OF MONARCHY.

“ Strip it of its externals, and what is it but a *jest* ? ”

Charade on the word MAXIM.

“ As for politics, I think poets are *Tories* by nature, supposing them to be by nature poets. The love of an individual person or family, that has worn a crown for many successions, is an inclination greatly adapted to the fanciful tribe. On the other hand, mathematicians, abstract reasoners, of no manner of attachment to persons, at least to the visible part of them, but prodigiously devoted to the ideas of virtue, liberty, and so forth, are generally *Whigs*. It happens agreeably enough to this maxim, that the Whigs are friends to that wise, plodding, unpoetical people, the Dutch.”—*Shenstone's Letters*, 1746.

THE Spirit of Monarchy, then, is nothing but the craving in the human mind after the Sensible and the One. It is not so much a matter of state-necessity or policy, as a natural infirmity, a disease, a false appetite in the popular feeling, which must be gratified. Man is an individual animal with narrow faculties, but infinite desires, which he is anxious to

concentrate in some one object within the grasp of his imagination, and where, if he cannot be all that he wishes himself, he may at least contemplate his own pride, vanity, and passions, displayed in their most extravagant dimensions in a being no bigger and no better than himself. Each individual would (were it in his power) be a king, a God: but as he cannot, the next best thing is to see this reflex image of his self-love, the darling passion of his breast, realized, embodied out of himself in the first object he can lay his hands on for the purpose. The slave admires the tyrant, because the last *is*, what the first *would be*. He surveys himself all over in the glass of royalty. The swelling, bloated, self-importance of the one is the very counter-part and ultimate goal of the abject servility of the other. But both hate mankind for the same reason, because a respect for humanity is a diversion to their inordinate self-love, and the idea of the general good is a check to the gross intemperance of passion. The worthlessness of the object does not diminish but irritate the propensity to admire. It serves to pamper our imagination equally, and does not provoke our envy. All we want is to aggrandize our own vain-glory at second hand; and the less of real superiority or excellence there is in the

person we fix upon as our proxy in this dramatic exhibition, the more easily can we change places with him, and fancy ourselves as good as he. Nay, the descent favours the rise; and we heap our tribute of applause the higher, in proportion as it is a free gift. An idol is not the worse for being of coarse materials; a king should be a common-place man. Otherwise, he is superior in his own nature, and not dependent on our bounty or caprice. Man is a poetical animal, and delights in fiction. We like to have scope for the exercise of our mere will. We make kings of men, and Gods of stocks and stones: we are not jealous of the creatures of our own hands. We only want a peg or loop to hang our idle fancies on, a puppet to dress up, a lay-figure to paint from. It is "THING Ferdinand, and not KING Ferdinand," as it was wisely and wittily observed. We ask only for the stage effect; we do not go behind the scenes, or it would go hard with many of our prejudices! We see the symbols of Majesty, we enjoy the pomp, we crouch before the power, we walk in the procession, and make part of the pageant, and we say in our secret hearts, there is nothing but accident that prevents us from being at the head of it. There is something in the mock-sublimity of

thrones, wonderfully congenial to the human mind. Every man feels that he could sit there; every man feels that he could look big there; every man feels that he could bow there; every man feels that he could play the monarch there. The transition is so easy, and so delightful! The imagination keeps pace with royal state,

“ And by the vision splendid
Is on its way attended.”

The Madman in Hogarth who fancies himself a king, is not a solitary instance of this species of hallucination. Almost every true and loyal subject holds such a barren sceptre in his hand; and the meanest of the rabble, as he runs by the monarch's side, has wit enough to think—“ There goes my *royal* self!” From the most absolute despot to the lowest slave there is but one step (no, not one) in point of real merit. As far as truth or reason is concerned, they might change situations to-morrow—nay, they constantly do so without the smallest loss or benefit to mankind! Tyranny, in a word, is a farce got up for the entertainment of poor human nature; and it might pass very well, if it did not so often turn into a tragedy.

We once heard a celebrated and elegant historian and a hearty Whig declare, he liked a

king like George III better than such a one as Buonaparte ; because, in the former case, there was nothing to overawe the imagination but birth and situation ; whereas he could not so easily brook the double superiority of the other, mental as well as adventitious. So does the spirit of independence and the levelling pride of intellect join in with the servile rage of the vulgar ! This is the advantage which an hereditary has over an elective monarchy : for there is no end of the dispute about precedence while merit is supposed to determine it, each man laying claim to this in his own person ; so that there is no other way to set aside all controversy and heart-burnings, but by precluding moral and intellectual qualifications altogether, and referring the choice to accident, and giving the preference to a nonentity. “ A good king,” says Swift, “ should be, in all other respects, a mere cypher.”

It has been remarked, as a peculiarity in modern criticism, that the courtly and loyal make a point of crying up Mr Young, as an actor, and equally running down Mr Kean ; and it has been conjectured in consequence that Mr Kean was a *radical*. Truly, he is not a radical politician ; but what is as bad, he is a radical actor. He savours too much of the

reality. He is not a mock-tragedian, an automaton player—he is something besides his paraphernalia. He has “that within which passes shew.” There is not a particle of affinity between him and the patrons of the court-writers. Mr Young, on the contrary, is the very thing—all assumption and strut and measured pomp, full of self-importance, void of truth and nature, the mask of the characters he takes, a pasteboard figure, a stiff piece of wax-work. He fills the throne of tragedy, not like an upstart or usurper, but as a matter of course, decked out in his plumes of feathers, and robes of state, stuck into a posture, and repeating certain words by rote. Mr Kean has a heart in his bosom, beating with human passion (a thing for the great “to fear, not to delight in!”) he is a living man, and not an artificial one. How should those, who look to the surface, and never probe deeper, endure him? He is the antithesis of a court-actor. It is the object there to suppress and varnish over the feelings, not to give way to them. His *overt* manner must shock them, and be thought a breach of all decorum. They are in dread of his fiery humours, of coming near his Voltaic Battery—they choose rather to be roused gently from their self-complacent apathy by the application of Metallic Tractors. They dare not

trust their delicate nerves within the estuary of the passions, but would slumber out their torpid existence in a calm, a Dead Sea—the air of which extinguishes life and motion!

Would it not be hard upon a little girl, who is busy in dressing up a favourite doll, to pull it in pieces before her face in order to show her the bits of wood, the wool, and rags it is composed of? So it would be hard upon that great baby, the world, to take any of its idols to pieces, and show that they are nothing but painted wood. Neither of them would thank you, but consider the offer as an insult. The little girl knows as well as you do that her doll is a cheat; but she shuts her eyes to it, for she finds her account in keeping up the deception. Her doll is her pretty little self. In its glazed eyes, its cherry cheeks, its flaxen locks, its finery and its baby-house, she has a fairy vision of her own future charms, her future triumphs, a thousand hearts led captive, and an establishment for life. Harmless illusion! that can create something out of nothing, can make that which is good for nothing in itself so fine in appearance, and clothe a shapeless piece of deal-board with the attributes of a divinity! But the great world has been doing little else but playing at *make-believe* all its life-time. For several thousand

years its chief rage was to paint larger pieces of wood and smear them with gore and call them Gods and offer victims to them—slaughtered hecatombs, the fat of goats and oxen, or human sacrifices—shewing in this its love of shew, of cruelty, and imposture; and woe to him who should “peep through the blanket of the dark to cry, *Hold, hold.*”—*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, was the answer in all ages. It was in vain to represent to them, “Your Gods have eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not, neither do they understand”—the more stupid, brutish, helpless, and contemptible they were, the more furious, bigotted, and implacable were their votaries in their behalf.* The more absurd the fiction, the louder was the noise made to hide it—the more mischievous its tendency, the more did it excite all the phrenzy of the passions. Superstition nursed, with peculiar zeal, her ricketty, deformed, and preposterous offspring. She passed by the nobler races of animals even, to pay divine honours to the odious and unclean—she took toads and serpents, cats, rats, dogs, crocodiles, goats and monkeys, and hugged them to her

* “Of whatsoe’er descent his Godhead be,
 Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,
 In his defence his servants are as bold
 As if he had been made of beaten gold.”—*DRYDEN.*

bosom, and dandled them into deities, and set up altars to them, and drenched the earth with tears and blood in their defence ; and those who did not believe in them were cursed, and were forbidden the use of bread, of fire, and water, and to worship them was piety, and their images were held sacred, and their race became Gods in perpetuity and by divine right. To touch them, was sacrilege : to kill them, death, even in your own defence. If they stung you, you must die : if they infested the land with their numbers and their pollutions, there was no remedy. The nuisance was intolerable, impassive, immortal. Fear, religious horror, disgust, hatred, heightened the flame of bigotry and intolerance. There was nothing so odious or contemptible but it found a sanctuary in the more odious and contemptible perversity of human nature. The barbarous Gods of antiquity reigned *in contempt of their worshippers !*

This game was carried on through all the first ages of the world, and is still kept up in many parts of it ; and it is impossible to describe the wars, massacres, horrors, miseries and crimes, to which it gave colour, sanctity, and sway. The idea of a God, beneficent and just, the invisible maker of all things, was abhorrent to their gross, material notions. No, they must have Gods of

their own making, that they could see and handle, that they knew to be nothing in themselves but senseless images, and these they daubed over with the gaudy emblems of their own pride and passions, and these they lauded to the skies, and grew fierce, obscene, frantic before them, as the representatives of their sordid ignorance and barbaric vices. TRUTH, GOOD, were idle names to them, without a meaning. They must have a lie, a palpable, pernicious lie, to pamper their crude, unhallowed conceptions with, and to exercise the untameable fierceness of their wills. The Jews were the only people of antiquity who were withheld from running headlong into this abomination; yet so strong was the propensity in them (from inherent frailty as well as neighbouring example) that it could only be curbed and kept back by the hands of Omnipotence.* At length, reason prevailed over imagination so far, that these brute idols and their altars were overturned: it was thought too much to set up stocks and stones, Golden Calves and Brazen Serpents, as *bona fide* Gods and Goddesses, which men were

* They *would* have a king in spite of the devil. The image-worship of the Papists is a batch of the same leaven. The apishness of man's nature would not let even the Christian religion escape.

to fall down and worship at their peril—and Pope long after summed up the merits of the whole mythologic tribe in a handsome distich—

“ Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust.”

It was thought a bold stride to divert the course of our imaginations, the overflowings of our enthusiasm, our love of the mighty and the marvellous, from the dead to the living *subject*, and there we stick. We have got living idols, instead of dead ones; and we fancy that they are real, and put faith in them accordingly. Oh, Reason! when will thy long minority expire? It is not now the fashion to make Gods of wood and stone and brass, but we make kings of common men, and are proud of our own handy-work. We take a child from his birth, and we agree, when he grows up to be a man, to heap the highest honours of the state upon him, and to pay the most devoted homage to his will. Is there any thing in the person, “any mark, any likelihood,” to warrant this sovereign awe and dread? No: he may be little better than an idiot, little short of a madman, and yet he is no less qualified for king.* If he can

* “In fact, the argument drawn from the supposed incapacity of the people against a representative Government,

contrive to pass the College of Physicians, the Heralds' College dub him divine. Can we make any given individual taller or stronger or wiser than other men, or different in any respect from what nature intended him to be? No; but we can make a king of him. We cannot add a cubit to the stature, or instil a virtue into the minds of monarchs—but we can put a sceptre into their hands, a crown upon their heads, we can

comes with the worst grace in the world from the patrons and admirers of hereditary government. Surely, if government were a thing requiring the utmost stretch of genius, wisdom, and virtue to carry it on, the office of King would never even have been dreamt of as hereditary, any more than that of poet, painter, or philosopher. It is easy here 'for the son to tread in the Sire's steady steps.' It requires nothing but the will to do it. Extraordinary talents are not once looked for. Nay, a person, who would never have risen by natural abilities to the situation of churchwarden or parish beadle, succeeds by unquestionable right to the possession of a throne, and wields the energies of an empire, or decides the fate of the world with the smallest possible share of human understanding. The line of distinction which separates the regal purple from the slabbering-bib is sometimes fine indeed; as we see in the case of the two Ferdinands. Any one above the rank of an idiot is supposed capable of exercising the highest functions of royal state. Yet these are the persons who talk of the people as a swinish multitude, and taunt them with their want of refinement and philosophy."—*Yellow Dwarf*, p. 84.

set them on an eminence, we can surround them with circumstance, we can aggrandise them with power, we can pamper their appetites, we can pander to their wills. We can do every thing to exalt them in external rank and station—nothing to lift them one step higher in the scale of moral or intellectual excellence. Education does not give capacity or temper; and the education of kings is not especially directed to useful knowledge or liberal sentiment. What then is the state of the case? The highest respect of the community and of every individual in it is paid and is due of right there, where perhaps not an idea can take root, or a single virtue be engrafted. Is not this to erect a standard of esteem directly opposite to that of mind and morals? The lawful monarch may be the best or the worst man in his dominions, he may be the wisest or the weakest, the wittiest or the stupidest: still he is equally entitled to our homage as king, for it is the place and power we bow to, and not the man. He may be a sublimation of all the vices and diseases of the human heart; yet we are not to say so, we dare not even think so. “Fear God, and honour the King,” is equally a maxim at all times and seasons. The personal character of the king has nothing to do with the question.

Thus the extrinsic is set up over the intrinsic by authority: wealth and interest lend their countenance to gilded vice and infamy on principle, and outward show and advantages become the symbols and the standard of respect in despite of useful qualities or well-directed efforts through all ranks and gradations of society. "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness left." The whole style of moral thinking, feeling, acting, is in a false tone—is hollow, spurious, meretricious. Virtue, says Montesquieu, is the principle of republics; honour, of a monarchy. But it is "honour dishonourable, sin-bred"—it is the honour of trucking a principle for a place, of exchanging our honest convictions for a ribbon or a garter. The business of life is a scramble for unmerited precedence. Is not the highest respect entailed, the highest station filled without any possible proofs or pretensions to public spirit or public principle? Shall not the next places to it be secured by the sacrifice of them? It is the order of the day, the understood etiquette of courts and kingdoms. For the servants of the crown to presume on merit, when the crown itself is held as an heir-loom by prescription, is a kind of *lèse majesté*, an indirect attainder of the title to the succession. Are not all

eyes turned to the sun of court-favour? Who would not then reflect its smile by the performance of any acts which can avail in the eye of the great, and by the surrender of any virtue, which attracts neither notice nor applause? The stream of corruption begins at the fountain-head of court-influence. The sympathy of mankind is that on which all strong feeling and opinion floats; and this sets in full in every absolute monarchy to the side of tinsel show and iron-handed power, in contempt and defiance of right and wrong. The right and the wrong are of little consequence, compared to the *in* and the *out*. The distinction between Whig and Tory is merely nominal: neither have their country one bit at heart. Phaw! we had forgot—Our British monarchy is a mixed, and the only perfect form of government; and therefore what is here said cannot properly apply to it. But **MIGHT BEFORE RIGHT** is the motto blazoned on the front of unimpaired and undivided Sovereignty!—

A court is the centre of fashion; and no less so, for being the sink of luxury and vice—

—“Of outward shew
Elaborate, of inward less exact.”

The goods of fortune, the baits of power, the

indulgences of vanity, may be accumulated without end, and the taste for them increases as it is gratified : the love of virtue, the pursuit of truth, grow stale and dull in the dissipation of a court. Virtue is thought crabbed and morose, knowledge pedantic, while every sense is pampered, and every folly tolerated. Every thing tends naturally to personal aggrandisement and unrestrained self-will. It is easier for monarchs as well as other men "to tread the primrose path of dalliance" than "to scale the steep and thorny road to heaven." The vices, when they have leave from power and authority, go greater lengths than the virtues ; example justifies almost every excess, and "nice customs curtesy to great kings." What chance is there that monarchs should not yield to the temptations of gallantry then, when youth and beauty are as wax ? What female heart can indeed withstand the attractions of a throne—the smile that melts all hearts, the air that awes rebellion, the frown that kings dread, the hand that scatters fairy wealth, that bestows titles, places, honour, power, the breast on which the star glitters, the head circled with a diadem, whose dress dazzles with its richness and its taste, who has nations at his command, senates at his controul, "in form and motion so express and admirable, in action how

like an angel, in apprehension how like a God ; the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals !” The power of resistance is so much the less, where fashion extends impunity to the frail offender, and screens the loss of character.

“ Vice is undone, if she forgets her birth,
 And stoops from angels to the dregs of earth ;
 But 'tis the fall degrades her to a whore :
 Let greatness own her, and she's mean no more.
 Her birth, her beauty, crowds and courts confess,
 Chaste matrons praise her, and grave bishops bless.
 In golden chains the willing world she draws,
 And hers the Gospel is, and hers the laws.”*

* A lady of quality abroad, in allusion to the gallantries of the reigning Prince, being told, “ I suppose it will be your turn next ?” said, “ No, I hope not ; for you know it is impossible to refuse !” What a satire on the court and fashionables ! If this be true, female virtue in the blaze of royalty is no more than the moth in the candle, or ice in the sun's ray. What will the great themselves say to it, in whom at this rate,

— “ the same luck holds,
 They all are subjects, courtiers, and cuckolds !”

Out upon it ! We'll not believe it. Alas ! poor virtue, what is to become of the very idea of it, if we are to be told that every man within the precincts of a palace is an *hypothetical* cuckold, or holds his wife's virtue in trust for the Prince ? We entertain no doubt that many ladies of quality have resisted the importunities of a throne, and that many more would do so in private life, if they had the desired opportu-

The air of a court is not assuredly that which is most favourable to the practice of self-denial and strict morality. We increase the temptations of wealth, of power, and pleasure a thousand-fold, while we can give no additional force to the antagonist principles of reason, disinterested integrity and goodness of heart. Is it to be wondered at that courts and palaces have produced so many monsters of avarice, cruelty, and lust? The adept in voluptuousness is not likely to be a proportionable proficient in humanity. To feed on plate or be clothed in purple, is not to feel for the hungry and the naked. He who has the greatest power put into his hands, will only become more impatient of any restraint in the use of it. To have the welfare and the lives of millions placed at our disposal, is a sort of warrant, a challenge to squander them without mercy. An arbitrary monarch set over the heads of his fellows does not identify

nity: nay, we have been assured by several that a king would no more be able to prevail with them than any other man! If however there is any foundation for the above insinuation, it throws no small light on the Spirit of Monarchy, which by the supposition implies in it the *virtual* surrender of the whole sex at discretion; and at the same time accounts perhaps for the indifference shown by some monarchs in availing themselves of so mechanical a privilege.

himself with them, or learn to comprehend their rights or sympathise with their interests, but looks down upon them as of a different species from himself, as insects crawling on the face of the earth, that he may trample on at his pleasure, or if he spares them, it is an act of royal grace;—he is besotted with power, blinded with prerogative, an alien to his nature, a traitor to his trust, and instead of being the organ of public feeling and public opinion, is an excrescence and an anomaly in the state, a bloated mass of morbid humours and proud flesh! A constitutional king, on the other hand, is a servant of the public, a representative of the people's wants and wishes, dispensing justice and mercy according to law. Such a monarch is the King of England! Such was his late, and such is his present Majesty George the IVth!—

Let us take the Spirit of Monarchy in its highest state of exaltation, in the moment of its proudest triumph—a Coronation-day. We now see it in our mind's eye; the preparation of weeks—the expectation of months—the seats, the privileged places, are occupied in the obscurity of night, and in silence—the day dawns slowly, big with the hope of Cæsar and of Rome—the golden censers are set in order, the tables

groan with splendour and with luxury—within the inner space the rows of peeresses are set, and revealed to the eye decked out in ostrich feathers and pearls, like beds of lilies sparkling with a thousand dew-drops—the marshals and the heralds are in motion—the full organ, majestic, peals forth the Coronation Anthem—every thing is ready—and all at once the Majesty of kingdoms bursts upon the astonished sight—his person is swelled out with all the gorgeousness of dress, and swathed in bales of silk and golden tissues—the bow with which he greets the assembled multitude, and the representatives of foreign kings, is the climax of conscious dignity, bending gracefully on its own bosom, and instantly thrown back into the sightless air, as if asking no recognition in return—the oath of mutual fealty between him and his people is taken—the fairest flowers of female beauty precede the Sovereign, scattering roses; the sons of princes page his heels, holding up the robes of crimson and ermine—he staggers and reels under the weight of royal pomp, and of a nation's eyes; and thus the pageant is launched into the open day, dazzling the sun, whose beams seem beaten back by the sun of royalty—there were the warrior, the statesman, and the mitred head—there was Prince Leopold, like a panther

in its dark glossy pride, and Castlereagh, clad in triumphant smiles and snowy satin, unstained with his own blood—the loud trumpet brays, the cannon roars, the spires are mad with music, the stones in the street are startled at the presence of a king:—the crowd press on, the metropolis heaves like a sea in restless motion, the air is thick with loyalty's quick pants in its monarch's arms—all eyes drink up the sight, all tongues reverberate the sound—

“A present deity they shout around,
A present deity the vaulted roofs rebound!”

What does it all amount to? A show—a theatrical spectacle! What does it prove? That a king is crowned, that a king is dead! What is the moral to be drawn from it, that is likely to sink into the heart of a nation? That greatness consists in finery, and that supreme merit is the dower of birth and fortune! It is a form, a ceremony to which each successor to the throne is entitled in his turn as a matter of right. Does it depend on the inheritance of virtue, on the acquisition of knowledge in the new monarch, whether he shall be thus exalted in the eyes of the people? No:—to say so is not only an offence in manners, but a violation of the laws. The king reigns in contempt of any

such pragmatistical distinctions. They are set aside, proscribed, treasonable, as it relates to the august person of the monarch; what is likely to become of them in the minds of the people? A Coronation overlays and drowns all such considerations for a generation to come, and so far it serves its purpose well. It debauches the understandings of the people, and makes them the slaves of sense and show. It laughs to scorn and tramples upon every other claim to distinction or respect. Is the chief person in the pageant a tyrant? It does not lessen, but aggrandise him to the imagination. Is he the king of a free people? We make up in love and loyalty what we want in fear. Is he young? He borrows understanding and experience from the learning and tried wisdom of councils and parliaments. Is he old? He leans upon the youth and beauty that attend his triumph. Is he weak? Armies support him with their myriads. Is he diseased? What is health to a staff of physicians? Does he die? The truth is out, and he is then—nothing!

There is a cant among court-sycophants of calling all those who are opposed to them “the rabble,” “fellows,” “miscreants,” &c. This shows the grossness of their ideas of all true merit, and the false standard of rank and power

by which they measure every thing; like footmen, who suppose their masters must be gentlemen, and that the rest of the world are low people. Whatever is opposed to power, they think despicable; whatever suffers oppression, they think deserves it. They are ever ready to side with the strong, to insult and trample on the weak. This is with us a pitiful fashion of thinking. They are not of the mind of Pope, who was so full of the opposite conviction, that he has even written a bad couplet to express it:—

“Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow:
The rest is all but leather and prunella.”

Those lines in Cowper also must sound very puerile or old-fashioned to courtly ears:—

“The only amaranthine flower on earth
Is virtue; the only lasting treasure, truth.”

To this sentiment, however, we subscribe our hearts and hands. There is nothing truly liberal but that which postpones its own claims to those of propriety—or great, but that which looks out of itself to others. All power is but an unabated nuisance, a barbarous assumption, an aggravated injustice, that is not directed to the common good: all grandeur that has not something corresponding to it in personal merit and heroic acts, is a deliberate burlesque, and an insult on

common sense and human nature. That which is true, the understanding ratifies: that which is good, the heart owns: all other claims are spurious, vitiated, mischievous, false—fit only for those who are sunk below contempt, or raised above opinion. We hold in scorn all *right-lined* pretensions but those of rectitude. If there is offence in this, we are ready to abide by it. If there is shame, we take it to ourselves: and we hope and hold that the time will come, when all other idols but those which represent pure truth and real good, will be looked upon with the same feelings of pity and wonder that we now look back to the images of Thor and Woden!

Really, that men born to a throne (limited or unlimited) should employ the brief span of their existence here in doing all the mischief in their power, in levying cruel wars and undermining the liberties of the world, to prove to themselves and others that their pride and passions are of more consequence than the welfare of mankind at large, would seem a little astonishing, but that the fact is so. It is not our business to preach lectures to monarchs, but if we were at all disposed to attempt the ungracious task, we should do it in the words of an author who often addressed the ear of monarchs.

“A man may read a sermon,” says Jeremy

Taylor, "the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escorial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time shall be no more : and where *our* kings have been crowned, their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grandsire's head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like Gods to die like men. There is enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the height of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires, to sully and dash out the dissembling colours of a lustful, artificial, and imaginary beauty. There the warlike and the peaceful, the fortunate and the miserable, the beloved and the despised princes mingle their dust, and pay down their symbol of mortality, and tell all the world, that when we die our ashes shall be equal to kings, and our accounts shall be easier, and our pains for our crimes shall be less. To my apprehension, it is a sad record which is left by Athenæus concerning Ninus, the great Assyrian monarch, whose life and death is summed up in these words :

‘Ninus, the Assyrian, had an ocean of gold, and other riches more than the sand in the Caspian sea; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi; nor touched his God with the sacred rod, according to the laws; he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the Deity, nor administered justice, nor spake to the people, nor numbered them; but he was most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead: behold his sepulchre, and now hear where Ninus is. *Sometime I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust is all my portion: the wealth with which I was blest, my enemies meeting together shall carry away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to Hell; and when I went thither, I carried neither gold nor horse, nor a silver chariot. I that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust!*’—Taylor’s Holy Living and Dying.

THE END.



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